# THE ROMANCE

OF

# THE ENGLISH STAGE.

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BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.,

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF GARRICK," "THE KEMBLES," ETC.

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# PREFACE.

THERE are several collections in which the lives of the English actors and actresses have been set out. Of these the most important are Galt's "Lives of the Players," in which the substance, without the form, of the various theatrical autobiographies has been given, mingled, however, with much that is apocryphal; and the more recent "History of the English Stage," by Dr. Doran, which is brought down almost to our own day.

Nothing, however, hitherto published has professed to place before the public what may be considered the most interesting and characteristic feature of theatrical memoirs. Their chief attraction is found to be the air of personal confession, and simplicity of the revelations furnished—the *naïveté*, the humor, and almost garrulous confidence; above all, the quaint turn of expression in which everything is unfolded. A selection of such entertaining passages seemed likely to present a better idea of the player's nature and character, than the more official and historical accounts with which the public is already familiar; and this, it is hoped, has been attempted with some success in the following pages.

The carrying out of such a design naturally required

large space, for the list of theatrical autobiographies is a long one. It was necessary, therefore, that some principle should direct the selection. And this has been applied by admitting such narratives only as should illustrate some special type of life or character. Thus, the story of the unfortunate Mossop exhibits the proud and luckless player, —that of Mrs. Bellamy, the career of a gay and frivolous stage beauty. Tate Wilkinson's shows the pleasant vagabondage of a "wandering patentee:" while the pathetic history of Gerald Griffin sets out the weary struggles of a young dramatist in the world of London. The fate of Miss Ray, and the romance of Miss Smithson, illustrate the tragic and melodramatic sides of stage life respectively; while the career of Elliston introduces us to the type of the airy Comedian, who plays as consistently in every-day life as though he were at the footlights. Sketches of the exploded "strolling" days, with pictures of what came next in degree—the respectable provincial Theatre—have been added: and thus a tolerably complete view is obtained of the romance and humors of a fashion of life that has now almost passed away.

There are other stories which, on the ground of romance, might fairly claim a place, such as those of Macklin, Savage, Mrs. Inchbald, George Soane, and perhaps Mrs. Jordan. But space was wanting. What has been given will, it is hoped, be found sufficient to furnish a good idea of the player's life, character, and feelings, unfolded in his own words.

LONDON, 1874.

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# THE ROMANCE OF THE STAGE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THEATRICAL MEMOIRS.

THE singular fascination which the stage has always exercised, holding under its spell every race and generation, from the rudest to the most refined, has been thought not unworthy the serious inquiry of the philosopher. There is, indeed, nothing in human society so deeply rooted, or so independent of taste or fashion: and the relish for stage entertainment is now as keen and even passionate as it was in the remote days when the finest actors flourished. Without entering very deeply into the matter, it could be shown in a few words that this ineradicable taste is the same as that which finds a gratification in the thrilling excitement of politics, in following the skirmishings and varying fortunes of a trial in the courts, or even the lively skirmishing of conversation. These are all so many shapes of histrionic entertainment, for the most part imperfect and wanting dramatic power, but, so far as they go, offering glimpses of genuine interest. When a really exciting situation is evolved spontaneously and naturally in any of these arenas, nothing can exceed the avidity with which it is followed. Time itself is annihilated, for the hours fly by like moments: the weight of existence, for those at least on whom it lies heavily, is lifted off: and even surrounding acces-

sories, meagre and squalid though they be, become almost glorified. But for the average mass of mankind this sort of enjoyment is out of reach. The opportunities are few; for "the people" is busy with material interests, while its intellect and cultivation is of a homely order. Indeed, the pure crowd cannot hope to see anything more dramatic than a street commotion, an altercation, or a public-house discussion. Even among the cultivated and opulent classes, the dramatic surprises of real life cannot be reckoned on. Everything dramatic is spontaneous, not to be bespoken by the influence of money or rank. An exciting and witty conversation of the give-and-take order is no more to be foreordained, than a humorist can be directed "to begin to be funny." The most dramatic debates in Parliament are those which have arisen out of some unprepared-for incident. Even in a *cause célèbre*, while allowing a margin for vulgar curiosity and for the mere eagerness to see what every one is eager to see, there is an indescribable sense of interest aroused when, say a plaintiff comes to be cross-examined. For this means that the human mind will be exhibited under the most varied surprises,—will be forced, perhaps unwillingly, to the test of truth and falsehood, exhibiting the whole round of emotions, exciting the listeners by its repulses, and, when all seems lost, its desperate rallies. Apart from the stimulant of ordinary curiosity, the fact of so rare an exhibition going on rouses the dramatic passion and causes that press and eagerness which attend on every remarkable trial. So with a debate; so with even the poorest kind of street discussion.

This sort of entertainment, then, being rare and accidental, and "the crowd" not being likely to meet with opportunities of enjoying it, it was discovered that a sort of substitute could be offered for it, under fixed and regular conditions. A kind of reproduction of the dramatic in-

cidents of real life was found to be as interesting as the original. Gifted men, either by inspiration or art, soon reached to the secret, and discovered that by due selection and abstraction dramatic elements could be made to produce more exciting results than the chance occurrences of daily life. The "writing of a play" is thus the result of philosophical thought applied to unregulated accidents, and offers the combination within a short space and time, and in the most forcible fashion, of what in real life might be diluted over years of time and miles of space.

This little inquiry will show, perhaps explain, the natural fascination which the stage and its associations seem to have for mankind. We see reflected the most piquant conditions of our life, emotions, humors, as in a mirror, with all that interests our curiosity and passions. There is a tenderness and indulgence even now maintained by the very strength of old traditions, in spite of the commercial character assumed by theatrical undertakings and the mere shows they offer. This feeling has come down to us from the days of the great actors and the great plays, when early repasts allowed of assiduous attendance, night after night, in pit and boxes: from the time when the fine actor or actress was as conspicuous a personage as a prime minister, and the night of his finest impersonation as important as that of a great bill or debate. It was the intellectual *man*, with the situations in which he figured, that excited enthusiasm: an impression independent of scenery or dress. The sense of the great character, as it were, filled the air. It was as the presence of some potentate. Even lately, when Sheridan's comedies were stereotyped in the bills and the nights of performance were counted by hundreds, there was a mysterious effect of vitality produced. We pass the doors of the playhouse with a certain reverence. Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. Joseph Surface, and other well-known

characters, with all their nature and liveliness, seem to be residing within: their faces look out from photographs in the shop windows, marvelous to say with an actual intelligence and harmonious significance that would never have been inspired in modern pieces.

The most persistent grumbler and most eager asserter of the supremacy of the palmy old days of the drama still entertains a fond interest and curiosity in current theatrical events. The critiques are carefully read: they have the mysterious "orange-peel" flavor. He lingers before the playhouses, and ponders over the bills. In spite of *désillusionnement* and a steady succession of disappointments he clings to the old faith. The foot-lights, the "borders," the glimpse of the uninviting and cavernous stage-door stirs emotions—gives a thrill, which a Mayfair hall-door held open, with a procession of entering belles, would fail to excite. The late Mr. Dickens rarely passed through the most obscure provincial town without being drawn away by the attraction of the local theatre, no matter what its quality. The once common association of the flavor of orange-peel with playhouse recollections has become scarcely appreciable by the new generation. But more mature playgoers will own to the almost magical power of such a reminder, which will call up the darkened passages, the delicious expectancy of childhood—the huge solemnity of the green curtain, which descended in waves, as it were, and with a funereal effect. There has passed away also the old-fashioned playbill, long and fluttering, with a vast deal of lustrous printer's ink, which had a peculiar savor of its own—not unwelcome—and which even soiled the kid gloves. The new theatres are boudoirs, the bills are lace-edged like valentines, and highly scented; the orange-women and their great baskets would be rudely inappropriate in such, though oranges may be seen often

elegantly arranged with the dainties at the glittering bars of Messrs. Spiers and Pond and other caterers. The curtain is usually a gaudy drop-scene, with an inelegant roller, which shuts up the closing tableau from view, marks its arrival on the boards with a hollow thud, and often displays a cheerful Italian landscape. Chocolate, mauve, crimson, amber, and other gaudy tints have been found more in keeping with the garish and elaborate shows behind. Such decorations have a sort of *mesquin* air; and there was unquestionably a truer dramatic instinct in the simplicity and indefiniteness of the huge exposure of dark green and something more significant of "the end," which it was sought to present with wholesome effect to the spectators.

In those old days there was simplicity about everything connected with the stage—and it was "THE PLAY," with the absorbing interest of the story, that so fascinated the beholder's soul. The spell was an intellectual one, though it might be conceived that the sensual element might have appealed more directly. It may be doubted if, in these days of *féeries*, so gorgeous with scenic marvels, of vast bands of young ladies, "glorified" with gold and silver armor, the charm would have been as potent. In the boy's mind the whole was a sort of etherealized "story-book," and the enormous and insuperable barrier that so hopelessly separated him from the figures made them seem almost like immortals. There is something in the condition of anything seen upon the stage that almost justifies this delightful hallucination. Figures and groups under the fierce light, with the gorgeous coloring and picturesque background, acquire an air heroic and supernatural which no logic will displace. The active steps of a graceful *danseuse* seem, from the boxes, to have a mysterious airiness and lightness, though on a near view they are no

more than a series of leaps made with considerable muscular exertion. The steady playgoer, though disgusted with repeated disappointments from bad acting, never quite loses the old faith, and to the very last something like the child's exaggerated belief is his.

But there are other conditions, apart from their immediate presence on the stage, which lend a curious charm to actors and actresses. Lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and politicians attract no particular attention when removed from their special stages, and are most effective when busy with their callings. But actors, outside their profession, have always been an interesting class. They seem to carry into the colder and ruder world of life some of the fitful adventures of that unreal sphere in which they figure from dusk until midnight. The experience of our time, it may be thought, helped by the practical tone of the day, shows the actor to be a being of more than average homeliness. While the ideal world behind the scenes is all show, decoration, and gorgeousness, and a commercial spirit regulates the whole, it is but natural that this artificial tone should draw down the living elements to a more prosy level than even that of everyday life. But where the spirit of pure acting obtains, where the theatre scenery is comparatively naught, and THE PLAY—extract of real life—with all its broad characters and humors, is the attraction, then the actors do not merely share the ordinary dignities of life, but are elevated beyond it. After the performance of some great piece like the "School for Scandal," we come away with a feeling compounded of reverence and wonder. We have seen what is not altogether a mimicry of life: the performers seem not so much actors, as sharers in the action; we think of them with curiosity and admiration; we look upon them, even follow them in the street, drawn by an irresistible attraction, much as Lamb followed the

"retired Diocletian of Islington," as he delighted to style Quick. So have we seen an eminent member of the Français corps pursued down the whole length of a boulevard, with eagerly turning heads and scarcely repressed exclamations. This tribute may be of course paid to say one of our leading "comiques," but it takes the shape of a too familiar recognition, accompanied by a not over respectful grin. This distinction is really founded on an admission of superiority; for we feel that the interpreter of a great dramatic part is infinitely above us: whereas every one knows that, with a little training, we could figure quite as respectably as the mechanical characters who help off a sensation piece, or the diverting beings who sing and dance and joke through a popular burlesque. It would be curious to apply this standard to the case of our living English actors, and it would be found by no means a bad plan for ascertaining their position. We shall find ourselves regarding those whose fame is associated with the greater comedies and established characters with a reverence that contrasts oddly with what we entertain towards those who support indiscriminately all the multifarious characters offered to them in the ephemeral dramas of our day. The result is the outlines of their figures and faces are blurred and indistinct. They are mere privates in the ranks, doing duty in turn: and one is about as effective as another; whereas those who have been associated with pieces of mark stand out with the distinctness of a political character.*

* This principle is exhibited in a minor degree even in that cloud of histrionic photographs which fill the shop windows. There are seen ranks upon ranks of the most noted performers; and though the costumes are the most bizarre and extravagant, the wearers being "done in character," the impression left is of the feeblest and most indistinct kind. On the other hand, a portrait, say of Mr. Clayton as Surface, is of the most re-

"A goodly company of comedians," says Hazlitt, in an enthusiastic essay, "a theatre royal judiciously managed, is your true Heralds' College, the only Antiquarian Society that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and it is pleasanter to see them even in their own persons than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain coat than for the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which, indeed, is peculiar to it, is, that we not only admire the talents of those that adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affection as actors. We meet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they almost always recall to us pleasant associations, and we feel our gratitude excited without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation." These are happily-chosen phrases, and it is within the experience of most people that they are thus affected; though of course after a faint fashion, as these remarks were written some fifty years ago, when intellectual pieces and characters held the stage.

This little description brings us to the purpose of the present volume, which is to show the pleasant romance that has colored the lives of actors and actresses of true quality and genuine order. In other walks of life there is a certain selfishness which repels. The eminent lawyer or physician, as he advances to the foremost position, does not entertain as he moves. The actor of the old time, who spent all his life interpreting characters in great comedies, and who

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markable kind, and for its brilliance, expression, and intelligence, almost deserves a place beside the fine old theatrical mezzotints of the last century. The magic of this effect is owing to the constant familiarity of the actor with an intelligent part, which has impressed itself even on his face and bearing.

every night found his intelligence and wit spurred by a reciprocal intelligence and wit that were greater, and whose exertions were watched and checked by an intelligent audience, must have been an interesting being with gifts quite exceptional. Add to this that entering on the profession was like starting to explore some wild and adventurous country; there were no agents, few provincial theatres, and but two great ones in London, admission into which seemed as remote as the hope of the Lord Chancellorship to a young barrister. The chance of success was desperate, and the weary probation, with its long delays and hardships, seemed to require all the shifts and talents of the adventurer. This makes the charm of the crowd of theatrical memoirs, written chiefly at the end of the last century and during the first twenty years of the present, which fill many a shelf in the library. These show that the actors were wits and humorists, pleasant companions at the tables of the wise and great, travelers and writers; while the actresses were lovely women, with a purpose beyond exhibiting their scantily-draped figures in *tableaux vivants*, where they become insipid, but striving to win approbation by the graces of intelligence, expression, and character. Most of these ladies had their history and offered lives of curious incident. The lives of few women in any other class are found associated with such adventures. Heroines of elopements and abductions—the causes of sanguinary duels—the pursued of men of rank and fashion; now rolling in wealth and magnificence; now carried to sponging-houses and sunk in misery; now mixing with wits and ladies of quality; now the favorites of kings and princes—they passed through all the most opposite vicissitudes. Actors are also found to be subject to the same alternations of life—of prosperity, adversity, and misery—and this life usually presented the most curious complexions of adventure. It is strange that the theatrical history of

other countries, and notably of France, should not have the same adventurous interest. With a few exceptions, the lives of foreign players show the regular and perhaps uninteresting progression found in other professions. But a more remarkable difference is found in the wealth of theatrical memoirs for which England is distinguished, and which make a very characteristic department of modern literature. Its attraction is indeed increased by the fact that with the decay of acting the taste for writing as well as for reading such records has decayed also, and though some recent actors have set down their recollections, these are of such a poor and meagre sort, wanting in color and substance, that they have found few readers, and are not worthy of a great support. The reason of this would appear to be, that the modern actor's life, in proportion as his art has fallen away from the old high ideal, offers nothing striking or genuine; while the spurious exhibitions which now engage his exertions remove him altogether from opportunities of struggle and steady honorable advancement, the record of which it would be interesting to read.

It is indeed extraordinary the variety of entertainment that is to be found in these adventures. Tate Wilkinson, Mrs. Bellamy, Colman, O'Keeffe, Reynolds, Geo. Frederick Cooke, Elliston, and Mathews are perhaps the most genuine and interesting of the whole. Wilkinson's biography, taken as a free, unaffected confession, is a picture of a mind revealing itself in the most natural way, defying grammar and even words themselves, and taking the shortest, straightest, readiest way to unfold his thoughts. The infinite variety, the strange language and ideas, the shrewd judgment and observations, the quaint remarks, and the naïve revelation of mean and paltry motives; with the pleasant sketches of the manners and characters of the day, —this curious compound, entitled "Memoirs of Tate Wil-

kinson," in three volumes, with its sequel, "The Wandering Patentee," also in three volumes, deserves, as it seems to me, to be placed first in rank.* Reynolds and O'Keeffe's may perhaps be placed next, written in a dashing, jovial style, full of droll, convivial stories. The valuable portion of O'Keeffe's memoirs are his early recollections, which stretch back very far, especially his sketches of the old-world manners, which are done picturesquely. The younger Colman's are entertaining, and much in the same rollicking key as Reynolds's, but they make only a fragment and have little to do with the stage. Mrs. Bellamy's story is very rambling, and at times incoherent, but it is full of details, and is marked by that curious token of the garrulous chronicler—an exaggeration of trifling matters, the passing by or suppression of important things. It exhibits pictures of the most dismal alternations in a beautiful actress's life—wealth, splendor, jewels, applause, succeeded by disgrace, bailiffs, sponging-houses, and absolute destitution. A pendant for which history may be found in the story of Mrs. Baddeley, another beautiful actress, but a woman of inferior degree in every respect. She ran a wild, dissipated course, with the same alternations of wealth and wretchedness, the jewels and rich dresses—being succeeded by the inevitable bailiffs and the sponging-house. A third story—that of the handsome Mrs. Sumbel—offers much the same character; but, like that of Mrs. Baddeley, is but fitfully connected with the stage. It is curious that ladies of this description should have been too illiterate to write their own stories, which were put together, under their direction, by some indifferent hack writers. There is, however, a native gen-

* At this moment the six little tomes are very scarce, especially the sequel, which is almost *introuvable*.

uine vulgarity about them, and a rambling incoherence, which proves that they were dictated or inspired by the subjects of the narratives. Yet, though written under such conditions, there is present the charm of candor and a certain sincerity—an eagerness to confess too much, rather than too little. In the more modern theatrical memoirs there is an affectation and restraint—a wish to place the narrator in the best view—to which is sacrificed all freedom and interest: the result, indeed, as in the case of such specimens as the "Memoirs of Lee Lewes" and "Edwin's Eccentricities," being almost blank. Lee Lewes, as Mr. Forster notes, was well acquainted with Goldsmith, Garrick, and other men of note—yet there is not a single particular about them in his book. He has nothing to tell. His mind seems to have been of the "valet" order, and all that it retained were some low green-room stories, without point or interest, which he seems to have retailed over a pipe and glass to the Grub Street assistant who was to fashion them into a book. "The Memoirs of Grimaldi," which Mr. Dickens from motives of good nature and charity introduced to the public, are perhaps the dullest of this class; and though written with diligence and care, show effectually that there is a prosy side to stage life, and that the mere annals of a dramatic career are more uninteresting than almost anything that can be related. Mere records of engagements, new plays, and characters performed, seem all-important to the actor, and indeed ought to be, in one sense; but to the reader such are bald and unwelcome. The poorest specimen of this class is perhaps the memoirs of one Donaldson, which, though running to many pages, contains little or nothing of recollection or observation. With this must be classed the late Paul Bedford's little book, which has some droll stories, but nothing of the least importance. The memoirs

of the elder Mathews, by his widow, are little more than a mass of materials for a memoir—a vast number of letters, newspaper cuttings, and "good stories," which swell the whole record to four bulky volumes, and make nearly 2000 pages of print. Mrs. Mathews had that diffuseness in her style which belongs to the stage—most players when writing down facetious stories expanding the description with what seem to them droll turns of their own, which are perhaps modeled on comic passages in dramas. Holcroft's are of value, being written by a trained *littérateur*, and offer some curious alternations of fortune. Raymond's "Life of Elliston" is a really singular book, written in a style congenial to the eccentricities of its hero, which, though often transgressing literary taste and decorum, overflows with a rollicking spirit. At the bottom of the list must be placed the pretentious memoirs of "Harriet, Duchess of St. Albans," by Mrs. Cornwell Baron Wilson —which contain very little.

It would be impossible to particularize all that has been contributed to this class of literature. It will be seen, however, from what is now about to be presented to the reader, that the incidents of the player's life—in most instances related by himself—offer pleasant entertainment.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE STROLLER'S LIFE.

THE state of the stage about one hundred years ago, and its condition at present, furnish a curious contrast. Now it is an important profession, with an enormous following. "Professionals" are to be counted by thousands, and theatres by hundreds, while the luxury of the age has enlarged the meaning of the words "the stage," formerly representing only what was purely intellectual, into whatever can entertain the eye or ear. Everything, indeed, that can be produced upon a raised platform so as to be conveniently seen by a large crowd seems to be included within the term of "the stage." The shows of the music-hall, gymnasts, tumblers and grotesque dancers, jugglers, delineators, mimics, comic singers—all have found a place upon the "stage"; while decorators, scene-painters, adjusters of the lime-light, gas-men, etc., form distinct and subsidiary callings. The system of "farming" has developed a special form of ability, displayed in the contracting for playbills, in dramatic agency and touring arrangements, advertising and the like. So that, in fact, it may be said that all that concerns the drama has grown to be of more importance than the drama itself.

In the last century two large theatres, and a small house allowed to be open for a few months in the year, were all that London could offer. A theatre of some repute at Bath, the two Dublin theatres, and one at Edinburgh, exhausted the list of first-class theatres in the kingdom. On what were known as "the circuits"—the York, Liver-

pool, and others—were found a number of small houses, very small and rude in their appointments, often some "converted" coach-house or chapel, and but rarely built for the purpose. These scarcely deserved the name of theatre, and were indeed only shapes more commodious and permanent of the ordinary barn in which strollers performed. Perhaps a couple of dozen completed the list of such places. To make the contrast more striking, there will be found in the morning papers some six feet of theatrical advertisement, exhausting every device of claptrap and self-commendation to call attention to the play of the night. In the last century a space of a couple of inches square was all that was necessary to carry out the purpose of such an announcement, viz., to declare what play would be performed that night and what were the names of the actors.

And yet, with these evidences of activity in our day, it may be safely said that the drama of the last century, though deficient in playhouses, advertisement, lime-light, etc., occupied a larger space in social life, had more influence, and filled the public mind more satisfactorily than does the huge histrionic organization of our time. This may seem something of a paradox, but a little reflection will show its truth. Even a single great actor or actress—such is the expansiveness of genius—is in himself sufficient to supply ample entertainment to a whole generation. All can find opportunity to see him, just as nearly every one of ordinary intellect and capacity contrived to see Mrs. Siddons or Garrick; and the result in the shape of intellectual entertainment was more profitable and less costly than the present bewildering system. Expense and show—costly dresses, etc., exhibited under strong light—it is now discovered with some astonishment, do not pay so well as the simple, unadorned gifts of a simple and solitary

player of ability. The "sensation" drama, which half a dozen years ago was the rage, has palled on the public taste after the shortest conceivable reign; while a strong-lunged tragedian of somewhat coarse power travels round from one provincial theatre to another, and draws vast and tumultuous audiences to hear some rude, but sound performances of the legitimate drama. In short, at some cost, we have learned the lesson that "the play's the thing" which at all times and seasons attracts and will attract; while shows and accessories, however magnificent, will offer but limited attractions, and these only for the vulgar.

It is curious that the two extremes of respect and contempt should have always attended the stage, though it must be said that for the latter the stage itself is mainly accountable. In the presence of fine acting, respect, dignity, awe, admiration are excited in the highest degree; while the perverted shapes of histrionic exhibition produce a curious feeling compounded of derision, tedium, and good-natured toleration. The reason of this would seem to be, that where vast publicity is invited the responsibility and risk are in the same proportion, and the contrast between the quality of the entertainment and the conspicuous position in which it is presented at once challenges a sort of contempt. Hence the low estimation in which those theatrical Pariahs known as STROLLERS have always been held; the very name being one of depreciation.

Strollers were the first in the line of those spurious representatives of the drama, whose connection with it does not go beyond the art of self-exhibition; and their legitimate successors are surely the race of burlesque performers or mimics, with such actors as try to extort laugh-

ter by gags, antics, and devices which have no connection with the character in hand. It might seem odd that the strollers, who, after all, honestly strove to carry out their purpose according to such lights as they enjoyed, should have encountered such obloquy. But it was felt that the publicity they sought should be supported by more than good intentions, and that ability and training at least should be present. The immediate cause of the contempt that pursued them was the absurd contrast offered between the grand characters they undertook—the kings, queens, heroes, etc.—the noble sentiments they uttered, and the wretched supporters of these characters. And in justice it must be said, that audiences were not so much affected by the meagre and squalid accessories, which were out of keeping with the regal and heroic state presented, as by the discrepancy between the actor's abilities and the part he represented.

The incidents of the strollers' life—their poverty, mean shifts, "the candle ends," the desperate straits for food and clothes—have furnished satirists and caricaturists with some of their most effective pictures—the subject offering infinite opportunity for humorous treatment. Churchill, Scarron, and Hogarth have reveled in these details, and left—the first specially—a pitiless dissection of these infirmities. His scathing lines will be remembered; and indeed nothing more inviting in the way of bitter satire could be conceived than the stroller, who was classed by the village constables with gypsies and vagabonds, and who was generally some youth who had run away from the counter or the desk to lay rude hands on Shakespeare.

It is almost painful to follow the tale of humiliations which made up the career of these hapless creatures. It would almost seem that no class of the community ever passed through such a probation to earn miserable and

uncertain wages. Yet, after all, the grand ideal was before them, like an ignis fatuus, and sustained the genuine probationer: the more earthly followers found themselves hopelessly committed and could not draw back. To have been a stroller was a fatal hindrance to any other calling, while the shifty character of the life hopelessly demoralized inferior natures. On the other hand, no finer probation could be conceived for the sincere student who was possessed of real theatrical genius. To such preparation Kemble and Siddons and Kean owed half their later triumphs.

The mortifications and hardships of the tribe were endless. The memoirs are full of stories of their being hunted by beadles from towns and villages—of their lying in bed till night, their ordinary clothes being seized by the landlady for rent—of their pulling up turnips in convenient fields to stay their hunger; and a fair idea of the profit to be gained by this calling may be gathered from the not unfrequent sharing of the night's receipts among the members of the company, viz., a shilling and "*six pieces of candle ends*" falling to each.* But Stephen Kemble told the late Mr. John Taylor a story which, though trifling, is profoundly significant of what used to be the social estimation of the stroller. "He once told me," he says, "that while he was walking in a town in Ireland with the mayor, who *honored* him with his arm, one of the inferior actors bowed to the magistrate with the most obsequious humility, but did not attract any notice. The man then

* "I remember," said Mr. King in the green-room of Drury-lane, "that when I had been a short time on the stage I performed one night King Richard, gave two comic songs, played in an interlude, danced a hornpipe, spoke a prologue, afterwards harlequin, in a sharing company; and, after all this fatigue, *my share came to threepence and two pieces of candle.*"—*Everard's Memoirs*, p. 62.

ran before them, and at another convenient spot repeated his humiliating obeisance. Still, however, he was passed without observation. Again he ran to a place where he thought he was more likely to draw attention, but was equally unsuccessful. Anxious to testify his respect for the mayor, he tried again at another convenient point, manifesting, if possible, a more obsequious courtesy. At length the obduracy of the mayor softened, though not subdued in pride; he turned his head to look at the persevering actor, but without even a nod of recognition, and hastily uttered, 'I see you, I see you,' which the poor actor considered as an act of gracious condescension."

Many of these strollers who afterwards attained a respectable position on the stage, have told the history of their early trials with the utmost frankness; indeed, seeming to look back with a sort of good-humor to the very serious privations of this period of their lives. Bernard, who was secretary to the extinct Beefsteak Club, has left some very entertaining recollections of this kind, while Ryley, a professed "itinerant," as he called himself, has, in very rambling style, given a rude but truthful picture of the coarser side of such experiences. There was a dismal uniformity in these reports. The eager neophyte who had run away to join the profession was invariably confounded at finding the manager some low, ill-kept, ill-dressed personage of the coarsest manners, dashed with a singular eccentricity, which, oddly enough, seemed inseparable from a position of command. He found the company in a state of helpless destitution, the terms of engagement usually being either "on salary," when the performer was to receive about eight or nine shillings a week, or "on sharings," when his gains were to be speculative. In either case, the result was generally of the same disastrous kind. After the first week there was no salary, and the company, in

debt to the whole village, were told they must share and "take what was going." Or, if they had originally elected to share, the six candle ends and a few pence were impartially distributed among them. There were always loud murmurs and hostility to the manager, who was often suspected of fraud, he claiming so many shares for his scenery, dresses, etc. But in most instances this was unjust, as he was usually the most destitute of the party. Indeed, the manager's almost invariable embarrassment was to find an embargo laid upon his scenes and dresses for debt, while his actors were expecting their wages from him with which to pay their over-due lodging and board. They were thus unable to set out for the next town where races and assizes were going on, and where there was some faint hope that cash might come in. In this dead-lock an arrangement was usually come to: some trunks and dresses were left as a security, or the most confiding member of the party was induced to advance a few hoarded pounds. The sufferings of the members of the corps were yet more severe; they had to extricate themselves as best they could. Indeed, the life of these poor wayfarers seemed to be uncolored by anything but hardship and persecution, and it seems amazing how it could have had the slightest attraction. But their perseverance and endurance, worthy of a higher reward, could only have been supported by the hope of passing through all this squalor and privation to the grand goal which lay at the end.

Everything seemed to conspire to degrade the follower of the rickety Thespian cart. In time he was found competing for the office of "orator," as it was called—or bill-distributor—which in the town or village was entitled to be remunerated by a shilling, in the country by two. The duties of this office consisted in waiting on the hucksters and shopkeepers, in opening relations with the butlers and

footmen at "great houses," who were to contrive to bring these programmes to the notice of the owners. Any one who would follow the shifts and degradations of the calling will find them set out in the dismal narrative of "an unfortunate son of Thespis," by one Edward Everard. There he will follow the poor stroller walking from town —his wife "lying in" on the way—defrauded by managers, bullied by roughs, receiving little glimpses of hope when Sir Sydney Smith, or "Lord Erskine's brother, the Hon. Henry Erskine," allowed his name to be put at the top of the bill: now with Mr. Thornton, who "managed sixteen theatres;" now with "Jemmy Whitely," who goes off with his pockets full of money, and leaves "the sharers" without a farthing. In a company "at Evesham in the vale, pleasant in itself, but not so to us, with about eighteen men, twelve women, three good and *constant* musicians, handsome scenes and superb dresses, I did not get four shillings a week. Mr. Durrivan, a man possessed of a happy, dry humor, made me laugh one night when I observed to him that he had got on a most elegant rich suit of clothes. 'Ay,' said he, lifting up the flap of his vest, which covered his knees, and the crimson velvet could scarcely be seen for the gold lace and spangles—'Ay! *starving in pomp!*'" The poor wretches struggled on, yet sometimes found a Samaritan.

One of these well-experienced highway managers, one Ryley, whose nine volumes have become almost *introuvable*, tells the story of their trials very simply and naturally. And indeed it is worth noting how these poor adventurers battled on in the face of reverses which would have crushed another who was of a different profession. The reader will notice in all these confessions a rude but satisfactory form of expression, as though their sufferings came back on them vividly as they wrote, and caused the

words to crowd to their lips. He thus describes strolling management:—

"I had been scarcely a month or so there, before they had to throw, as was customary, for the benefits. I wished to decline, alleging the short time I had been in the company, and that there was no partner to go with me; then being told that the nights were all fixed, and that I could possibly have no other chance; at last reluctantly I consented, and, as ill chance would have it, won the first night. As I had purposely been laid on the shelf, a little vanity, more than the hopes of gain, urged me to venture; the trouble and any additional expense I knew must be all my own, and, if there should be any profit, I had to share it with an undeserving set; I therefore took no pains about it. I flattered myself that I should have an opportunity of showing myself to some advantage, which, in the end, might answer some end, and that I should have the secret satisfaction of mortifying them a little in my turn. As I foresaw, so it fell out; there was hardly the bare nightly charges. After playing Touchstone, Young Philpot, and dancing, I went home penniless. I had lodged and boarded with an old woman, who kept a creditable public house; she was at the play; I was unavoidably in her debt. I never was more cast down and dispirited; I could with difficulty muster courage to open the door. When I entered, I shall never forget my reception. I believe she saw my backwardness. 'Come, come along,' says she; 'bless your dear little legs.' This was a wonderful cordial to my drooping spirits; I never stood in greater need of one; but she nor her husband would be satisfied, till out of his friendly bottle I had taken two cordials; then told me there was a little fowl just boiled and ready for my supper; not to be uneasy about anything, but make myself comfortable; adding, 'I see now plainly the reason of

some of them backbiting you, but they will be glad now to come cap in hand to you.' Her words proved true; for next morning, early, two of my greatest enviers waited on me, to request that I would play a particular character, and dance for their benefit the next night. My good landlady told them their own. I confess I secretly triumphed in my turn, and then, being fully satisfied, complied with every one's desire till the last night: the manager told me next morning, that all the scenes and dresses must be taken down and packed up and sent to Stamford the next day, but that as I had had no benefit, and done so much for the company, they had all made an offer to stop and play next night gratis, for my benefit, if, under such circumstances, I could do anything. I gave out and performed the 'Stratagem' and 'Lying Valet,' to about ten pounds, under every disadvantage, and my whole expenses did not amount to ten shillings."

"The sharing plan," says the manager Ryley, "was always my aversion; to remedy this I made a proposal to try the town of Ludlow upon small salaries of half a guinea, fifteen shillings, and a guinea, according to the merit and utility of the different performers. This was cheerfully agreed to, and we arrived in safety at this romantically picturesque place.

"Having fixed my wife and little Fanny in a delightfully rural lodging, I thought it behoved me to pay attention to 'the property,' which was on its way. Accordingly I walked towards the suburbs leading to Worcester, in hopes of meeting the wagons which contained the scenery, wardrobe, etc. At the entrance of the town I observed a concourse of people collected round a four-wheeled carriage which moved slowly, and on its approach I found to my surprise it was 'the property'; and such an exhibition! Had the carter endeavored to excite a mob he could not

have done it more effectually than by the manner in which he had packed the load. Some scenes and figures belonging to a pantomime lay on the top of the boxes, which were numerous, and piled very high. To keep them steady he had placed a door on which was painted in large characters '*Tom's Punch House*' in front of the wagon; this soon gave a title to the whole. Upon the uppermost box and right over the door was a giant's head of huge dimensions, whose lower jaw, being elastic hung, opened with every jolt of the carriage. By the side of this tremendous head rode our large mastiff, who, enraged at the shouts of the mob, barked and bellowed forth vengeance.

"The letters on the door had of course stamped it for a puppet-show, to corroborate which the impudent carter, somewhat in liquor, had placed a pasteboard helmet on his head, whilst with awkward gesticulation he thumped an old tambourine, to the no small amusement of the spectators. To finish the farcical physiognomy of this fascinating group, Bonny Long, his wife, and nine children, sat in the rear, Bonny in a large cocked hat, his wife with a child at her breast, wrapped in a Scotch plaid, and the other eight in little red jackets. As soon as I beheld the comic effect produced by this *tout ensemble*, I slipped down a back street. I was waiting at the theatre with some impatience, when the stage-keeper came running to inform me that the wagon was overturned and Mr. Long killed. In an instant I was on the spot, and sure enough there lay the contents of the cart, and Bonny Long under the whole. The crowd had considerably increased; some were humanely employed in lifting off boxes in order to release the sufferer, others supported his wife, who, though safe from the fall, was in fits for the fate of her husband, whilst the eight little brats in scarlet jackets ran about like dancing dogs prepared for a stage exhibition. Poor Long was at length liberated with

no other inconvenience than what was occasioned by the suffocating dust arising from the old scenes, which had completely preserved him from the pressure of the boxes. The only misfortune this accident caused was the death of our watchful mastiff. This noble creature, when the wagon overturned, kept the men at bay lest his master's property should be purloined, till a blacksmith, who had been drawn from his anvil and stood gazing with the sledge-hammer on his shoulder, gave the poor animal a blow behind the ear which put a sudden period to his existence. This callous Cyclops was at my suit arraigned on the following day before a magistrate, who acquitted him on the blacksmith's plea of self-defense.

"The theatre was a miserably poor place, and when filled would scarcely contain twenty pounds. We opened it the following Monday with the comedy of 'The Beaux' Stratagem.' The receipts amounted to five pounds, and though the company were much reduced, I found a continuance of such receipts would disable me from paying the salaries. The second and third nights were not much better, and the third week I found myself under the unpleasant necessity of addressing the company and placing them on the old establishment. The houses instead of improving went from bad to worse; dissatisfaction generally prevailed —'the sharing was not an existence.' This I very readily allowed, but surely no blame could be attached to me: in vain I urged the small receipts and heavy disbursements. One more witty than the rest chose to exercise his humor at my expense, and on the following day was seen walking down with his five-shilling share in a canvas purse at the end of his stick placed over his right shoulder; *jocularly* informing every one who inquired, that his last week's share was so heavy his arm ached with its weight. This sarcasm hurt me greatly. Ludlow races now approached

and great expectations were formed: overflowing houses were promised, and I vainly hoped it would be in my power to make amends for the miserable pittance they had hitherto received. But here, as in most of my undertakings, fortune dashed down the cup of hope just as I was raising it to my lips—on the first race night a ball opposed the theatre, and the receipts were so trifling it was not thought proper to perform. To make amends for this I applied to the stewards to patronize the next night, but this could not be effected; the grand ordinary dinner was to be that evening, and would detain the company till a late hour. As there were only two days' races I was now at my wits' end: the only probable way of drawing them to the theatre was to perform in the morning. Again I waited on the stewards and obtained their consent and promised attendance. Accordingly the 'Castle of Andalusia' was advertised by desire of the stewards of the race, to begin at eleven o'clock. This new and unpleasant time of performance was particularly irksome—to shut out daylight and to substitute candles for the glorious sun on a hot summer's morn appeared little better than sacrilege; but there was no alternative between this and empty benches. The time arrived, and with this astonishing patronage we raised eleven pounds. The benefits were now our only resource, and even that bore a melancholy aspect."

He now changes the scene:—

"At this time I received a letter from Mr. Smith, one of the proprietors of the Wolverhampton theatre, couched in terms of strong persuasion; he was certain, if I brought my company to the fair, receipts could not be less than two hundred pounds. This was a strong temptation: I consulted the performers. They were as sanguine as myself, and, as I never looked on the dark side of things, I speedily embarked in this troublesome and expensive undertaking;

but the anxiety of mind that attended the removal of this unfortunate company, with their still more unfortunate manager, is indescribable. We arrived without accident, and the theatre was advertised to open on the Monday. Had I been as well acquainted as I am now with the description of people who attend fairs, especially merry-making fairs, I should never have undertaken this disastrous journey. Three, four, and five pounds were the customary receipts. In a state of mind bordering on distraction I went over to Birmingham, and, by way of *forcing* a house for the last night, engaged Messrs. Grist, Banks, and Barrymore to perform in 'Othello' and 'Rosina,' for which I was to give them each a guinea and pay the chaise-hire. The receipts of that night, with all this *great acting*, amounted to seven pounds ! ! ! out of which I had to pay these gentlemen three guineas, besides traveling expenses ! ! ! I have known actors, ay and poor ones too, who would have received the three guineas with some appearance of regret; nay, there are those who would not have taken them at all: but these great people were superior to such little prejudices. They not only received them with ease and good-humor, but the greatest man of the three made a famous good story of it, to the great delight of his auditors, in the Birmingham green-room next day. Yet so blind was I to the narrowness of this conduct, that the supper bill (no small one, it may be supposed, when 'tis recollected who composed the party) I discharged under the idea of gentlemanly hospitality—a prejudice which ought to have died with my shipwrecked fortune. The hour of departure arrived, and thirty pounds, the whole of the week's receipts, were all that I had to satisfy the actors, by lending each a little, and a long train of incidental expenses incurred by the journey, besides chaises to carry us back, and maintenance on the road. This was

the greatest difficulty I had ever experienced; to wait upon the different tradesmen with apologies instead of money was, to a man of my temperament, grating beyond all description. However, there was no alternative: when I told my story, they were gentle and kind, and would patiently wait my own time of payment. Credit for chaises to transport us back was likewise cheerfully granted, and we left Wolverhampton, after this inauspicious week, minus about fifty pounds.

"The benefits commenced at Ludlow, and each performer managed to clear a trifle; but Bonny Long outdid them all. As soon as his benefit was announced Mrs. Long washed her eight children and dressed them in the scarlet spencers which never made their appearance except at benefits and their first arrival in a town. At the head of this little tribe she paraded the streets, in her Scotch plaid, with a large bundle of playbills, and solicited custom at every respectable dwelling. The novelty of these *little red runabouts*, added to the good-humor and affability of the father, brought an overflowing house; and so much was honest Bonny respected, there was not an individual in the theatre who did not rejoice in his success."

Other seasons equally disastrous follow:—

"*Gloucester.*—By way of raising one decent house, I endeavored to get a play patronized; and, as luck would have it, the Earl of —— and several persons of distinction were then at the Hop Pole, where I understood they intended to remain a few days. This incident completely routed the blue devils, who had of late been my constant companions. I dressed myself in a handsome suit of black, with my best laced ruffles; my hair was put in the most exact trim, and into Fossegate Street I bent my way. I have always remarked that the time to carry a point

which depends merely on good-humor is about half an hour after the cloth is drawn: I hit this period to a nicety. I followed a puppy-looking servant upstairs; I heard him announce me as Mr. Romney, manager of the theatre; upon which the whole company burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, at the same time repeating the word 'manager!' in a manner that gave me to understand they entertained no great reverence for the character. 'Oh, the ma-na-ger!' continued his drawling Lordship, when laughter would permit; 'show the manager in. We shall have some fun, my Lady.' Filled with contempt, I was turning to make a precipitate retreat, when the servant threw open the door and discovered me. 'Walk in, Mr. Ma-na-ger!' cried his Lordship, nodding significantly at a baronet who sat at the bottom of the table and was leisurely picking his teeth. A degree of disappointment was apparent. I dare say they had painted the manager as a motley-dressed man adorned with tinsel, who would servilely cringe and bow for the favor of being insulted by such honorable brutes. Perceiving their mistake, with a bold steady step I walked up to my Lord and laid before him a list of plays. 'Oh ay! Plays. My Lady, will you bespeak a play?'—'Why really, my Lord, I have no idea of strollers—pray, Mr. Manager, what sort of a set are yours?' During this time her Ladyship's eye, through a quizzing glass, was fixed upon me with steady effrontery. The baronet asked, 'Have you any fine girls in your troop, Mr. What's-your-name?'"

After more of this treatment he made an indignant protest and retired. When he reached home he found a note from one of the ladies of the party, complimenting him on his spirit and inclosing ten pounds.

His cheerfulness and perseverance were at last rewarded, and he emerged from this life of shifts and degradation.

Though he never was "well off," he was removed from want, and was often kindly assisted by higher members of the profession.

To this grotesque race of strolling managers belonged "Jemmy Whitely" and Penchard, of whom most leading players had stories to tell. There was a family likeness in their peculiarities; shifts and habitual debts and difficulties encourage a habit of wheedling and jocosity, intended to humor the pressing creditor; and this treatment, being sometimes found successful, may have been fostered by practice. Gentlemen "who live by their wits," as it is called, have found this manner a valuable auxiliary. Mr. Bernard thus describes one of the fraternity:—

"I was now," he says, "introduced to a room fitted up in an inn, and Manager Penchard. Here was the old system of paper wings, hoop chandelier, superannuated scenery—fiddler, property-man, and lamp-lighter identical, with a company five in number, the first and worst of whom was the manager himself.

"Mr. Penchard had been a manager fifty years, and, for that reason, continued to play all the juvenile characters. He was very tall, but stooped through infirmity. The gout was in both his legs, Shakespeare in his head, and money in his heart. He was a determined miser, and an actor by confederacy, that is, with the assistance of a remarkable peruke, which had been worn, as he averred, by Colley Cibber in 'The Fops.' It was such a wig as would now grace the head of a Lord Chief Justice; and in this, I was informed, he played the whole round of his characters – Hamlet, Don Felix, Lord Townley, and Zanga; so that he had obtained the familiar title throughout England of 'Penchard and his Wig.' On our way to his lodgings we were met by a member of the company, who knew Scott, and begged to join us, as he had a

favor to ask of his superior, which might not otherwise be granted.

"On reaching the house, we were shown upstairs into a dark, dingy, narrow little room, with a bed in one corner and an immense chest in the other. We found the manager seated in an elbow-chair, muffled in a morning-gown, which looked like an adaptation of a Venetian tunic, by the side of a three-legged table at which he was eating his breakfast. This meal consisted of a halfpenny roll and a halfpenny-worth of milk. At our entrance, he slightly inclined his head, with a 'Good-morning, gentlemen,' and continued his meal, leaving us upon our legs—but I forget, there were no more chairs in the room. Mr. Scott then introduced me to him; and the manager commenced a conversation by giving me some valuable advice as to the life I was about to embrace. In the intervals of his catarrh and lumbago, he at length grew facetious; and the person who accompanied us, thinking this to be a good opportunity, stepped up to his table, and said, with some hesitation, he had a trifling favor to ask. The manager's face elongated in an instant, and every wrinkle disappeared like a sudden calm at sea. 'A favor, Mr. Singer,' he mumbled; 'a trifling favor, eh! You are always asking trifling favors, sir, and such as are enough to ruin me. What is it you want this time?'—'The loan of a shilling, if it's not inconvenient.'—'A what?'—'A shilling, sir!'—'What can you do with your money?' At length he reluctantly drew a leathern pouch from his side, and selected a shilling from the silver it contained, which holding an instant between his finger and thumb, he remarked with some asperity—'You will remember, Mr. Singer, it was but last Saturday you shared three-and-sixpence, and this is Wednesday!'

"After Mr. Singer had made a proper acknowledgment and retired, the old gentleman detailed to us his system of

living, as a comment upon what he termed the ruinous extravagance of the age. Threepence a day, we were informed, supplied him with subsistence. In the morning, his roll and milk, as we observed; at dinner, a rasher of bacon and an egg; his tea, an *encore* to his breakfast; all of which was attainable for the above small sum. This was the severest lesson upon economy I ever received. But with penuriousness so palpable, I could not help thinking there was a considerable mixture of eccentricity; for he was known to have accumulated by his labors above a thousand pounds.

"In the evening, I seated myself on a front bench in the pit, to witness the performance. The play was 'The Recruiting Officer'; and the young and gallant Plume was supported by the manager. When the curtain drew up, he was discovered in his elbow-chair; one leg, swathed in flannel, resting on a stool. He was dressed in a Queen Anne suit of regimentals, crowned with his inseparable companion—the wig! which was surmounted by a peculiarly commanding cocked hat, such as may sometimes be seen in the sign-board representation of the Marquess of Granby. His performance of Plume was precisely that of Lord Ogleby; and all the business of the character consisted in his taking snuff, and producing and putting away a dirty pocket-handkerchief. As he could neither exit nor enter, when his scene was over, the curtain was lowered, and he was wheeled off till the next occurred. With the exception of my friend Scott in Kite, and Miss Penchard in Rose, the rest of the acting preserved a beautiful correspondence to the manager's. The company being as destitute of numbers as talent, Mrs. Penchard doubled Silvia and Captain Brazen; and Mr. Singer—Mr. Worthy, Costar Pearman, and Justice Balance, &c.

"Mrs. Penchard, the wife, from a certain slimness of

figure and volatility of spirit (though turned sixty), had retained many characters in genteel comedy which were too bustling for her husband to perform, and thus became what was styled the 'Breeches figure' of the company. The 'gallant gay Lothario' had but lately and reluctantly been given up to her by her husband; and during its performance one evening, when falling in the combat, part of her dress became discomposed, at which the gallery portion of the audience set up a loud clapping and shouting: this the old lady unfortunately mistook for approbation; and when her daughter, at the wing, repeatedly requested her to come off, 'I won't—I won't!' she replied, loud enough to be heard by the spectators; 'crack your jealous heart, you don't want any one to get applause but yourself!'

"Some days later we encountered Manager Penchard and his company going out of town. This was a picture!

"First came Mr. Singer and Mrs. Penchard, arm-in-arm; then old Joe, the stage-keeper, leading a Neddy (the property and old companion of Mr. Penchard in his wanderings) which supported two panniers containing the scenery and wardrobe; and above them, with a leg resting on each, Mr. Penchard himself, dressed in his 'Ranger' suit of 'brown and gold,' with his distinguishing wig, and a little three-cornered hat cocked on one side, giving the septuagenarian an air of gayety that well accorded with his known attachment for the rakes and lovers of the drama: one hand was knuckled in his side (his favorite position), and the other raised a pinch of snuff to his nose; and as he passed along he nodded and bowed to all about him, and seemed greatly pleased with the attention he excited. His daughter and two other persons brought up the rear."*

* Bernard's "Retrospects," vol. i. p. 91.

The same lively pen sketches manager Whitely:—

"On strolling about the town (of Nottingham), I perceived a playbill, and at the head of it the name of that celebrated itinerant, James Whitely, or Jemmy Whitely as he was familiarly called, a son of green Erin, and a worthy associate of those already recorded eccentrics, Thornton, Parker, and Bowles. The name and fame of this person pervaded the three kingdoms, and a hundred recollections of his personal and managerial peculiarities are now thronging my head; but most of which, as their effect depends upon a certain dramatic illustration, I regret are untransferable to paper. Perhaps this is fortunate, for were the case otherwise, I might write ten volumes of recollections instead of two. I will, however, select a few which are treatable, and the first to exemplify what I have just said.

"Whitely, in the course of his itinerancies, once came to a village where the magistrate was distinguished for two things,—an infirmity of nodding his head, and a genuine Jeremy-Collier distaste to plays and players. Jemmy, nevertheless, determined to wait upon him:—the magistrate was a butter merchant by trade; and Jemmy found him behind the counter, industriously attending to the wants of a dozen customers.

"'Plase, sir,' said Jemmy, taking off his hat, and bowing very low, 'my name's Mr. Whitely the manager, well known in the North of England and Ireland, and all the three kingdoms, for my respectability of karakter.' The magistrate stared, nodded his head, and said nothing. 'And I have come to ax your permission (nod again) in passing through the town (nod)—(there are no villages in dramatic geography)—to favor the inhabitants (nod), of whose liberal and enlightened karakter I have often heard (nod, nod), with a few evenings' entertainments' (nod, nod, nod).

"The magistrate's horror at the request had sealed his lips; but Jemmy interpreted the nodding of his head as a tacit consent, and a hint that he wished such consent to be kept secret from those who were about him. 'Oh, oh!' he continued, 'I understand your Worship (nod)—very well, sir (nod)—mum; thank you, sir (nod, nod),—your Worship and your family will come for nothing (nod, nod); good-morning to you, sir; I'm much obliged to you, sir; St. Patrick and the Saints keep you and your butter!' (nod, nod, nod.)

"Jemmy then hastened to his myrmidons; a room was engaged, the theatre fitted up, and the play announced. The magistrate in the mean time was informed of their design, and ordered his constables to attend and take the company into custody. His indignation at what appeared to him an open defiance of his authority, suggested this secret and severe mode of proceeding. As the curtain drew up, a pack of 'dogs in office' accordingly leaped on the stage, surrounded their victims, and though they did not 'worry them to death,' they carried them off in their stage clothes and embellishments to the house of the magistrate, leaving the audience (who had paid their money) in as great a quandary as themselves. The magistrate had put on an important wig and demeanor to receive the culprits, and demanded of Whitely, with an accent like that of Mossop in 'Mahomet,' 'Had he dared attempt to contaminate the inn and the village with a profane stage-play without his authority?' Whitely civilly replied, that he had received it. 'What! do you mean to assert that I gave you permission?' said the magistrate. 'No, sir; but I mean to say that you nodded your head when I axed you; and was not that maning that you gave your consent, but didn't want the Calvinistical bogtrotters who were buying your butter to know anything about it?'

"A long altercation ensued, which terminated in the release of the Thespians, on condition that they instantly quitted the 'town.'

"Jemmy, whenever he entered a place of importance in which he could pitch his tent, invariably dressed himself in his Don Felix suit (pink silk and white satin, spangled and slashed), with an enormously long feather and rapier, and, accompanied by a boy with a bell, proceeded to the market-place, where he announced his intended performances (this was in 1776). He then waited upon the principal inhabitants respectively, to obtain their patronage. On one occasion he entered the house of a retired tradesman, as vulgar as he was wealthy. Jemmy was shown into a room, where, in Oriental magnificence, the owner was reposing upon a couch. No sooner had the former disclosed the object of his visit, than the lordly adulterator of tea and sugar, eyeing him with an air of aristocratic contempt, exclaimed, 'Oh! you are what they call a strolling player, eh?' Jemmy's back stiffened in an instant from its rainbow inclination to an exact perpendicular, and, laying his hand upon his breast, he replied, 'Sir, whenever I'm blackguarded, I don't condescend to reply;' he then turned away, and walked out of the house.

"Jemmy was not particular in poor communities, as to whether he received the public support in money or in 'kind.' He would take meat, fowl, vegetables, &c., value them by scales, &c., and pass in the owner and friends for as many admissions as they amounted to. Thus his treasury very often on a Saturday resembled a butcher's warehouse rather than a banker's. At a village on the coast, the inhabitants brought him nothing but fish; but as the company could not subsist without its concomitants of bread, potatoes, and spirits, a general appeal was made to

his stomach and sympathies, and some alteration in the terms of admission required. Jemmy accordingly, after admitting nineteen persons one evening for a shad apiece, stopped the twentieth, and said, 'I beg your pardon, my darling, I am extramely sorry to refuse you; but if we ate any more fish, by the powers, we shall all be turned into mermaids!'"

This strolling life, the lowest stage of all, has a literature of its own; indeed, its professors are the most garrulous of all. These sketches, however, give a fair idea of this strange vagabond existence.

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## CHAPTER III.

### OLD YORK THEATRE.

In time the diligent stroller might fairly reckon on promotion and look for admission to the country theatre. Actors who became attached to a respectable house of this class were released from their vagabond mode of life, and enjoyed what was only an agreeable change, the passage from one theatre to another on the circuit. Such houses were directed by a solvent personage who had made money, and was held in esteem in the district. Salaries were paid; the actors were comfortable, and often enjoyed the excitement of learning that "a London manager was in the boxes." Even in this class, there were degrees; and theatres like that of York, Hull, or Liverpool, held a comparatively high position and supplied many performers to the London boards. The managers had a peculiar individuality, and a direct and personal influence with their audiences, which was not without a beneficial effect on the

drama. But, like the old-fashioned inn landlord who looked directly after the comfort of the guest, the old country manager has passed away; there is no place for him under modern theatrical arrangements. At the present time convenient and even elegant theatres have taken the place of the rude old edifices, where though modern scenic appliances and all that sets off acting were deficient, acting itself flourished. This revolution has taken place within the last thirty years, and the country theatre, as may be gathered from Mr. Dickens's vivacious sketches in "Nicholas Nickleby," retained until lately the old traditions and practices of the days of Tate Wilkinson. "The bespeak"—the waiting on local patrons at their houses, the rude devices for scenery and properties, of which the "pumps and tubs" were a figure—these were but lingering remnants of the old days in the last century, when Tate Wilkinson commanded at York and Hull, Austen at Chester, and Stephen Kemble in the North. Their necessities and shifts had taught the players wit, or at least liveliness and good-humor; and nearly all were remarkable for social gifts and oddities which excited a sort of interest and tolerance in the town and country folk who were their supporters. It is evident, however, that this fellowship must have entailed a certain dependence which was rather humiliating. We hear of the squireen at the inn door calling on the landlord "to turn that actor out of the bar"—of officers in the boxes requiring other unfortunate players to beg pardon "on their knees," with other stories of servitude. And yet, odd as the conclusion may appear, this contempt appears to argue a keener relish in the drama than is found at present, when, in rural districts, the interest has grown too languid even to take offense. Perhaps the most significant proof of the dependency of the poor players' position is conveyed by a truly piteous appeal attached to

an old York playbill, in which the manager pleads for the indulgence of his patrons—on whom he is in every way dependent. Nothing more humble could be conceived:—

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. ORFEUR,

Who is debarred the liberty of paying his respects and making his interest on the account of an action in the power of Mr. Huddy, from one at London.

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BY MR. KEREGAN'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS, at MR. BANKS' COCKPIT, without Boulham Bar:

THE MOURNING BRIDE.

---

NEW THEATRE, IN MY LORD IRWIN'S YARD, YORK.

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On Tuesday will be acted a Play called

HENRY THE IVTH,

WITH

THE HUMOURS OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF,

In which Mr. Keregan hopes the Gentlemen and Ladies of this City will favor him with their company, it being the only night he desires before subscription time, notwithstanding his great charges for their reception.

---

BOXES, Three Shillings. PIT, Two Shillings. STAGE, Three Shillings. MIDDLE GALLERY, One Shilling.

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N.B.—The Play will be all new dressed with new Scenes from London, suitable to his House; with a Prologue and Epilogue. The Musick consists of Overtures, Concertos, Sonatos, and Solos. Three Pieces will be performed before the Play begins: the first at five o'clock, the second at half-an-hour after five, and the third at six; at the end of which the Curtain will be drawn up.

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THE CASE OF THOMAS KEREGAN,

*Proprietor of the Theatre, humbly addressed to the Quality, Gentry, and Citizens of York.*

Having suffered very much of late in my business, and as I apprehend by an ill opinion conceived of me for keeping up my subscrip-

tion tickets at the price they were first given out on the erection of my new Theatre, it having been suggested that they might be afforded at a lower price, but an unreasonable desire had made me reject the advice of my friends in that respect, I thought it my duty as well as interest to give the inhabitants of this ancient city the best satisfaction I was able in this affair, by voluntarily laying before them the state of my last quarter's accounts, whereby it will appear that I was near one hundred pounds a loser by the last quarter's subscriptions only. And as I never did desire anything more than a reasonable maintenance for myself and family, I humbly hope, after the great expense I have been at, that I shall not be compelled to remove my company to some other place for the want of encouragement here. . . . I beg leave further to inform the public that, notwithstanding I have lowered the pit tickets to sixteen shillings, the advantage I have received by it hath been very small—viz., only the addition of fourteen subscribers, notwithstanding that it reduces the pit to sevenpence-halfpenny a night, which is less than half the price paid to the meanest company of players in the kingdom. Before I conclude this short representation of my case, I cannot but take notice that it hath been insinuated very much to my prejudice, *that neither myself nor my wife have been sufficiently thankful for favors which have been done us in coming to our benefits*, whereas I can say with great truth that no one was ever more sensible of (and thankful for) such favors than we both have always been, however we may have failed in any acknowledgments from the stage, a thing never practised in any theatre but this, it being contrary to the rules of the stage. But as we are now sensible it is expected from us, we shall take care for the future, to the best of our knowledge, to do nothing which may give offence to any of our friends and benefactors.

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| During quarter, with box and pit takes . . . . . | £288 | 13 | 3 |
| To 16 actors and actresses at 12*s.* and a pit ticket per week . . . . . | £145 | 12 | 0 |
| " Mrs. Evar and Mrs. Copen's children . . . . . | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| For the use of clothes, scenes, &c., from shares on salaries allowed by the meanest companies abroad . . | 72 | 16 | 0 |
| To charges of new people coming from London . . . | 10 | 10 | 0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| To 31 nights' charges, &c. . . . . | £124 0 0 |
| " getting up 2 Entertainments . . . . . | 30 0 0 |
| Sum total of expenses . . . . . | £384 8 0 |
| " receipts . . . . . | 288 13 3 |
| Lost last quarter . . . . . | £95 14 9 |

The persons who take my money have set their hands to this account, and, if necessary, are ready to make oath of the same.—W. GREEN, J. EMMETT.

For a more particular satisfaction, the following account of the nightly charges of acting:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Bills one day with another; incidents one night with another; drink to doorkeepers . . . . . | £2 14 0 |

Besides play-books, writing of plays out, and odd parts; for writing out music; drink for the music at practice; letters for several players, carpenters, and smiths; jobs often for particular plays; glasses frequently broke; washing the stock; cards; wax.

Poor Mr. Keregan! His "case" speaks a world of obsequious dependence and contemptuous patronage; and his apology for apparent ingratitude and the omission of the serf-like custom of "acknowledgments from the stage" is truly pathetic.

It was scarcely surprising that the player who retained some respect for himself should have shrunk from this act of homage. "After the play," says the old York manager Wilkinson, "the performer was to return thanks, and if married, both husband and wife to appear. Mr. Frodsham once, at York, spoke a comic epilogue, and actually carried his wife (now living) on and off the stage *on his back* to comply with the expected homage. On particular occasions, four or five children to make up weight, curtseying and bowing in frocks, had a wonderful effect; as the audience in general, and the ladies in particular, prided themselves on bestowing their bounty on such a painstaking man, or such a painstaking couple, as they proved them-

selves to be." At Norwich a drum and trumpet went round the town with the bill-distributor, who, after each flourish and roll, gave out the piece of the night. There were some who naturally thought these customs to be badges of servitude, and the manager of the York Theatre wished to abolish them, with what result his own quaint language shall tell:—

"I must describe," he says, "one severe edict in force when I assumed the regency reins: I mean the custom of the man and his wife returning thanks on the stage—and what was truly dreadful, the draggle-tailed Andromache, in frost, rain, hail, and snow, delivering her benefit play-bills from door to door, 'where piercing winds blew sharp, and the chill rain dropped from some penthouse on her wretched head.' But use had in some measure rendered it familiar—and no wonder if Hector's widow, when suppliant and in tears, was induced, on such solicitations, to accept with thanks a cheering drop. When I mentioned that degrading and painful custom to the company at York, previous to my being manager, they seemed to lament the woes they sustained as the laborious custom of their work-house duty. And the reader (particularly if theatrical) will start with astonishment when I aver on my word, that when I put the law in force to entirely and decidedly relieve those ladies and gentlemen from the complained-of evident hardship, it was received by the then York company of 1766 with marks of disgust, and a conspired combination against me, their chief, in consequence ensued—such is the force of habit, and the use of complying with despicable meanness rather than run the hazard of losing a trifle. So how could I make those free that were by nature slaves? Their pleas were, that the *quality would not come* (a phrase constantly used in country towns by the lower people); that the town inhabitants would be *much enraged*,

and that Mr. Wilkinson was not subjected to such supercilious duty: besides it was apparently to the advantage of the theatre; and as the manager shared the receipts on benefit nights, he had no cause to complain or be dissatisfied; he reaped the advantages, and the performers only had the difficulties to encounter. Those arguments I treated as futile, weak, absurd, and not to the purpose.

"Good God! what a sight! to actually behold Mr. Frodsham, bred as a gentleman, with fine natural talents, and esteemed in York as a Garrick, the Hamlet of the age, running after or stopping a gentleman on horseback to deliver his benefit bill, and beg half a crown (then the price of the boxes). During Mr. Baker's life I never had authority sufficient to prevent the performers from constantly attending the assembly-rooms and presenting their petitions; but when I was exalted from regent to the being sole monarch, for the credit of York city and myself, I was *then* obeyed; though in all states there will be now and then refractory black-hearted rebels start up, whose souls are truly malignant and not to be controlled, but in the end such people make themselves so hated and despised, that in consequence of their bad tongues, and their own actions giving the lie to their fawning and dissembled goodness, their services are shunned everywhere, and they fall into the net they designed for others."

The York Theatre was perhaps the best specimen of the country theatre; for the Bath Theatre held an exceptional position. This pre-eminence it owed to the tact, character, and exertions of its manager, Tate Wilkinson, who was known to several generations of the profession. Later he shall be introduced to relate his own adventures; but our view of the York Theatre—or indeed of the typical country theatre—would be incomplete without presenting this well-known figure.

Having made some money during a laborious life, he determined to invest it in this theatre, where he had often acted, but which the easy-going management of "old Baker" had reduced to decay. He was tired of wandering.

He invested his savings—nearly two thousand pounds—in the concern, and in the year 1766 entered on the management. For more than thirty years he conducted it with great success, and it may be added, singularity. He had tact enough to discern the promise of many obscure players, whom he encouraged with good salaries, and retained in his service until the "London manager"—that rock ahead of the thriving country theatre—beguiled them to town. It was thus that he developed the talents of Kemble, Siddons, Fawcett, Jordan, Inchbald, and many more. It was to his credit that after the great actress's first failure in London he should have received her warmly and given her the leading place. He was not, however, to be known simply as an enterprising manager. From being a student of eccentricity, he became himself the most eccentric of beings; and as he was in an irresponsible position, his oddities were encouraged to develop themselves. The name of the York house became known over the kingdom, and the stories of his peculiarities were the entertainment of every green-room.

The York Theatre helps us to a picture of the country-town society as it was in the last century. When the wealthy families came up for the York seasons, during race and assize weeks, the town filled to overflowing. The sheriff, and the stewards, and the officers, all patronized the theatre; and during those festivals the actors received double salaries.

One of the characteristics of the country theatre used to be the reasonable pride of the audience in their own per-

formers. Those who had lived among them for many years were known and respected, and reflected a certain credit on the place. It is indeed recorded, that when the reports of Garrick's extraordinary success reached Liverpool, the patrons of the drama there began to be exercised as to the question whether the new actor could be superior to their own two leading performers, Messrs. Gibson and Ridout, who enjoyed the highest reputation. This discussion became so exciting that at last a deputation going up to town on corporate business were charged specially to visit the theatre and bring back an accurate report. On their return the question was eagerly put, and, to the relief of the public, it was gravely announced "that Gibson and Ridout were on the whole superior." It was scarcely wonderful that, being thus appreciated, the local actor should hold his head high; and the York company could always show a "line of veterans" who had played from youth to old age, and who, confident in their superiority and in the admiration of the town, affected to disdain all metropolitan allurements. Conspicuous among these was Mr. Frodsham, "the York Roscius" in "old Baker's" time, and Mr. Cummins, the ancient tragedian of Wilkinson's,—both delightful characters. The sketch of Frodsham drawn by Wilkinson is admirable, and for gayety and humor might be a scene out of a good old comedy:—

"I apprehend that many persons in Yorkshire, whether the old who have seen Mr. Frodsham, or the young who have heard much of that gentleman, will be pleased with a description of him: I have therefore in this niche placed him; and shall here give (according to my best recollection) a concise sketch of the once much-talked-of, and the now almost forgotten Frodsham, who was thirty years ago termed the York Garrick.

"The abilities of that performer were unquestionable.

Mr. Frodsham had a quick genius, aided by a liberal education: but his mind, his understanding, and superabundant good qualities, were all warped and undermined by nocturnal habits; which failings unfortunately were supplied by refreshing pulls at the brandy-bottle in the morning, to take off all qualms from the stomach, till the certain consequence ensued of being enfeebled, disordered, mad, dropsical, and dead at the age of thirty-five.

"Mr. Powell of London, whom the stage had cause to lament, is the nearest assimilation I can give of Frodsham. Mr. Powell had the opportunity of strictly observing real artists, Garrick and Barry, in all their modes and shapes of grief: inattentive Frodsham unhappily was his own master, and a careless one; for though he set himself difficult tasks, he only now and then pursued the trump of fame with ardency or alacrity, but lagged, and never reached the goal, though a very little spurring and jockeyship would have made him come in first, and won many a theatrical plate. The public were so infatuated (and indeed he was so superior) that he cast all others at a distance in his York situation; and the audience too blindly and too partially (for his good) approved all he did beyond comparison; and when in full pride, before he wilfully sunk himself, I do not think any actor but Garrick would have been liked so well; and even Garrick, not without some old maids' opinions at a secret cabal, where Frodsham would have been voted superior, and under the rose appointed the man for the ladies. Nor would that decision in favor of Frodsham have been from elderly ladies only, as he had often melted the youthful fair ones of the tenderest moulds, whose hearts have been susceptible whenever Frodsham was the lover. Thus situated at 1*l.* 1*s.* per week salary, Frodsham had not any opportunity for observation or improvement: no infringement was suffered, or change of characters. About

thirty-two years ago he obtained a fortnight for holidays, which occasioned great lamentations at York, for they were certain if Mr. Garrick saw Frodsham it would be a woful day for the York stage. He not only was young and vain, but self-opinionated to a superabundant degree. When in London he left a card at Mr. Garrick's house, 'Mr. Frodsham of York,' with the same ease and facility as if it had been the first gentleman from Yorkshire. Mr. Garrick judged this card of a *country stroller* very easy and very extraordinary, and from the sample wished to see the York actor, who had accordingly admittance the ensuing day; and after a slight conversation, during which Garrick was astonished at the young man's being so very free and affable, particularly on any subject pertaining to Shakespeare's plays, &c., and still with a procrastination that Garrick was not accustomed to, or by any means relished a compliance with, he delayed, every minute expecting that Frodsham would present his petition to be heard, and receive his *commendation* from Garrick's eye of favor. But this obsequious request not being made, Garrick urged present business, and presented the York Romeo with an order for the pit, desiring him that night to favor him with attendance to see him perform Sir John Brute, accompanied with an invitation to breakfast the ensuing morning —at the same time asking him, 'Pray now, have you seen a play since your arrival in London?'—'Oh yes,' quickly answered Mr. Frodsham, 'I saw you play Hamlet two nights ago;' to which he added it was his own favorite character. 'Well,' says Garrick, 'pray now, how did you approve, Frodsham? I hope I pleased you:' for that night he had judged his performance a lucky hit. Frodsham replied, 'Oh, yes, certainly, my dear sir, vastly clever in several passages; but I cannot so far subjoin mine to the public opinion of London, as to say I was equally struck

with your whole performance in that part.' I do not conjecture that any actor who spoke to Garrick ever so amazed him. Garrick stammered, and said, 'Why—why now, to be sure now, why I suppose you in the country—Pray now, Mr. Frodsham, what sort of a place do you act in at York? Is it in a room, or riding-house, occasionally fitted up?' 'Oh no, sir, a theatre, upon my honor.'—'Oh sure, why my Lord Burlington has said that; why, will—will you breakfast to-morrow, and we will have a trial of skill, and Mrs. Garrick shall judge between us,—ha, ha, ha, now, I say. Good-day, Mr. York, for I must be at the theatre, so now pray remember breakfast.' Frodsham promised he would, and made his exit. And though Garrick himself told me the circumstance, and truly laughed then, yet I am certain at the time he had been greatly piqued, astonished, and surprised at so strange a visit from a country actor; yet wishing to satisfy his curiosity, had done it for once at the expense of his pride and dignity. The following day arrived the York hero at *Palais Royale* in Southampton Street, according to appointment—breakfast finished, with Madam Garrick as good superintendent, waiting with impatience, and full of various conjectures why the *poor* man from the country did not take courage and prostrate before the foot of majesty, humbly requesting a trial, engagement, etc., but as Frodsham did not, as expected, break the ice, Garrick did. 'Well, Mr. Frodsham, why now, well, that is, I suppose you saw my Brute last night? Now, no compliment, but tell Mrs. Garrick; well now, was it right? Do you think it would have pleased at York? Now speak what you think!'—'Oh!' says Frodsham, 'certainly, certainly; and, upon my honor, without compliment, I never was so highly delighted and entertained—it was beyond my comprehension: but having seen you play Hamlet first, your Sir John Brute exceeded my belief; for

I have been told, Hamlet, Mr. Garrick, is one of your first characters; but I must say, I flatter myself I play it almost as well; for comedy, my good sir, is your forte. But your Brute, d—n it, Mr. Garrick, your Brute was excellence itself! You stood on the stage in the drunken scene flourishing your sword; you placed youself in an attitude—I am sure you saw me in the pit at the same time, and with your eyes you seemed to say, "D—n it, Frodsham, did you ever see anything like that at York? Could you do that, Frodsham?"' (and it is possible the last remark was a just one.) The latter part of this harangue of Frodsham's possibly went not so glibly down as the tea at breakfast; and the ease and familiarity with which it was accompanied and delivered, not only surprised but mortified Garrick, who expected adulation and the bended knee.

"After much affectation of laughter, and seemingly approving all Frodsham had uttered—'Well now, hey! for a taste of your quality—now a speech, Mr. Frodsham, from Hamlet; and, Mrs. Garrick, "bear a wary eye."' Frodsham with the utmost composure, spoke Hamlet's first soliloquy without any idea of fear or terror, or indeed allowing Garrick, as a tragedian, a better Hamlet, or superior to himself; Garrick all the while darting his fiery eyes into the soul of Frodsham—a custom of Garrick's to all whom he deemed subservient, as if he meant to alarm and convey from those eyes an idea of intelligence to the beholder of his own amazing intellect. Garrick certainly possessed most extraordinary powers of eye, as they contained not only the fire and austerity he meant to convey, but his simplicity in Scrub, and archness of eye in Don John, were equally excellent and as various. On Frodsham the eye of terror had no such effect; for if he had noticed and thought Mr. Garrick's eyes were penetrating, he would inwardly have comforted himself his own were equally brilliant, if

not superiorly so. When Frodsham had finished Hamlet's first speech, and without stop, *To be or not to be*, &c., Garrick said, 'Well, hey now! hey! you have a smattering, but you want a little of my forming; and really in some passages you have acquired tones I do not by any means approve.' Frodsham tartly replied, 'Tones, Mr. Garrick! to be sure I have tones, but you are not familiarized to them. I have seen you act twice, Hamlet the first, and I thought you had odd tones, and Mrs. Cibber strange tones, and they were not quite agreeable to me on the first hearing, but I dare say I should soon be reconciled to them.'—'Why now,' says the much-astonished, wondering Garrick, 'nay now, this is—why now really, Frodsham, you are a d—d queer fellow; but for a fair and full trial of your genius my stage shall be open, and you shall act any part you please, and if you succeed we will then talk of terms.'—'Oh!' said Frodsham, in the same flighty flow of spirits, 'you are mistaken, my dear Mr. Garrick, if you think I came here to solicit an engagement; I am a Roscius at my own quarters! I came to London purposely to see a few plays, and looking on myself as a man not destitute of talents, I judged it a proper compliment to wait on a brother genius. I thought it indispensable to see you and have half an hour's conversation with you—I neither want nor wish for an engagement; for I would not abandon or relinquish the happiness I enjoy in Yorkshire for the first terms your great and grand city of London could afford;' and with a negligent, wild bow made his exit, and left the gazing Garrick following his shade, like Shakespeare's ghost, himself standing in an attitude of surprise, to ruminate and reflect, and to relate this account of the strangest mad actor he had ever seen, or ever after did see."

Once, when Colman came to York to make some engagements, a dinner was given in his honor by the manager.

The play for the evening was "The School for Scandal," and he asked with some curiosity who was to play Charles Surface. A respectable old gentleman of sixty was sitting opposite, who had been eating in silence, and to whom the manager pointed, saying, "Mr. Cummins is the *Charles*." The actor bowed complacently, and Colman could not restrain a grimace. This was the established glory of the York stage, who had ranted and mouthed for thirty or forty years, and whose position was secure. When Kemble, laboriously studying his profession, was attempting to make some impression on the Yorkshire "Tykes," it was pronounced that he was very good in his way, "but nothin' to Coomins!" A grave criticism from a local paper has been preserved in which good-natured words of warning and encouragement are given to the young aspirant, and he is told, if he would really wish to rise, to bestow pains on studying the various points of Mr. Cummins' style. Excellent as Kemble's promise was, the customs of the York stage were inflexible, and he was never allowed to interfere with Mr. Cummins, who to the last retained all his characters. This veteran was to be one of the few players who have died literally in harness, and drawn their last breath at the foot-lights.

All about the establishment had a dash of the director's eccentricity. The wardrobe-keeper, "Johnny Winter," who, though in care of a rich stock of dresses, had an almost invincible objection to allowing them to be used, was a character. All manner of spectacle was his particular dread and detestation, and Shakespeare's plays were classed and confounded by him with pieces requiring show, dress, and numbers. Above all, he hated to look out dresses for the supernumeraries, whom he called *superneedlesses*.* He argued against and resisted their aid, in the most senseless, selfish manner he was master of; and when

the night came, he would abuse the people and obstruct their preparations. Whenever the manager ordered the revival of any of Shakespeare's plays, his abhorrence of them was proportioned to their processions, and he was almost frantic during John Kemble's engagement, when the play of "Coriolanus" was revived. "*That* John Kemble and Shakespeare," Mr. Mathews heard him say, "have given me more trooble than all the other people in t' world put together, and my spouse into t' bargain." He especially hated "Henry the Eighth," and others of the historical plays that required numbers to be dressed.

Here as in other towns the players—or the manager, rather—were dependent on the caprices of their patrons—the squires, the small gentry of the town, and the officers. Mr. Wilkinson, however, had a certain independence, and by asserting that of his profession, succeeded in raising its dignity. The tyranny of these patrons was indeed insupportable. One night when Mr. Kemble was playing, a lady of position in the neighborhood disturbed the performance by loud remarks and ridicule of the actor. As this treatment was continued, Mr. Kemble, after many pauses and significant glances, at last came forward, and addressing the offender declared that he could not go on until the disturbance ceased. The lady was attended by some officers of the garrison, who resented what they considered "the insult," and uproariously insisted on his coming forward to apologize. The spirited actor refused. The performance was not allowed to go on. He came forward, and replied to the cries of submission with a decided "Never." On this the "influential" party left the box. On the next day the military gentlemen took the matter up, insisting on the dismissal of the offender, and attempting to intimidate the manager by declaring that unless the

wish was complied with, all further patronage should be withdrawn, and that they and their friends, with even the tradesmen they employed, should never enter the theatre. This was a serious crisis, but the veteran manager took a spirited part. He had always found Kemble "a gentleman," and respected him. He refused to dismiss him, saying that he was in the right, and that he valued him more than all the patronage of the family and its dependents. After many further attempts at bullying him into compliance his firmness prevailed, and the audience came round to his side.

Before he could thus vindicate his position the York manager had to undergo other humiliations:—

"This leads me to an anecdote, which suddenly and impulsively bursts on my recollection. A first esteemed gentleman in the spacious county of York, whose polished understanding and manners were universally acknowledged and admired, even to the extent of popularity in the great world, some few years since desired to patronize a play. I sent my treasurer with the catalogue (as is usual on such occasions to any leading person); but on looking over the list of tragedies, comedies, and farces, he declared he could not determine, and desired Mr. Wilkinson would attend him and his party after dinner, at the inn where he then for a few days resided. Which mandate I obeyed; and without being arrogant, in my idea (as his Majesty's patentee), undoubtedly expected being favored with sitting at the cheerful board, and holding some chit-chat relative to the play and farce that he intended to sanction. Instead of such usual and indeed common civility, after waiting a considerable time in the bar, I was at length ushered into the room where the company had dined, when Sir —— —— beckoned me to approach him at the upper end of the table, where I impertinently expected to have to sat

down; but neither found a vacancy, or the waiter even ordered to produce me a chair. Sir —— —— discoursed relative to the play—then of York city; graciously observed I had acted Bayes so as to merit his approbation; and to heighten the compliment remarked, he was no judge, as he seldom visited the theatre, either in London or elsewhere. At length he condescendingly asked me to drink a glass of wine, which I begged to decline; but he requested a worthy and respectable gentleman (now living) to give a glass, which he handed to me as if I had been a common porter waiting for a message: for I actually stood all the while at the backs of their chairs. I was most truly happy to depart, and from that day lost all anxiety or ray of inclination to pay my devoirs or wait on that great man, who was then termed the Grandison of the age.

"I would attribute this to want of thought at the time; but I do not see how that could be the case for so long a space, where sense and good breeding were by all allowed to be the characteristic qualities of that gentleman."

Here is his picture of a York race-week and its trials:—

"The York races (which in the year 1765 were in their great glory) made me imagine 'Love à la Mode' would prove of the highest consequence there; and I said to I by itself, I, *I* should do great things at the theatre from 'Love à la Mode,' which would go down pleasantly, and expected to be applauded as a Garrick, a Foote, and a Macklin, in the different characters: and here, good reader, you will observe a lesson for vanity, and as efficacious and as good a cure as are Spilsbury's drops for the scurvy, or Godbold's for a consumption.

"The Monday in the race week I fixed on Cadwallader in the farce, as a part I was certain the York audience were partial to me in, and judged I was established in their opinions. When at rehearsal that noon a message was

sent to me, while on the stage, that several gentlemen desired to speak with me in Mr. Baker's dining-room. I instantly obeyed the summons (first desiring the performers to wait), and in imagination assuring myself it must certainly be a complimentary intended bespoke play, for my performing in some shining character the night following. When I made my entrance into the room, in high mirth and glee, where the gentlemen were, and was singing aloud,

> York races are just now beginning,
> The lads and their lasses are coming,

after my bow, and on the survey of features, not recollecting one individnal face there assembled, I naturally requested to be acquainted with the honor of their commands, as I was at that time busily engaged with my attention to the rehearsal of 'The Author,' a farce of Mr. Foote's, which was intended for that very evening; when a young gentleman quickly replied, 'Sir, it is that very rehearsal and farce I came to put an immediate stop to;' then turning to Mr. Baker, said: 'Sir, you need not be informed the York Theatre is not licensed, and if you are not acquainted with another circumstance, I beg you will understand you are guilty of a double offence, by a flagrant breach of law and flying in the face of authority; as the impudent libel called 'The Author,' written by that scoundrel Foote, was stopped from any future performance six years ago, in December, 1758, and has not been permitted since. My name, Mr. Wilkinson, is Apreece, and the character of Cadwallader you mean to perform is an affront to the memory of my father (who is now dead): as his son, by G–d, I will not suffer such insolence to pass either unnoticed or unpunished; therefore if at night you dare attempt or presume to play that farce, myself and friends are determined, one and all, not to leave a bench or scene

in your theatre; so, Mr. Wilkinson, your immediate and determinate answer.' I could only refer to Mr. Baker, who was the manager and the proprietor; I was only on an engagement with that gentleman for the race week, and I should be guided by his opinion and direction. 'Well, Mr. Baker,' said Mr. Apreece, 'we wait your decision.' The old gentleman spoke thus: 'Why, look ye, d'ye see, gentlemen, if so be that is the case, why as to the matter of that, Mr. Wilkinson, d'ye see me, must not act Cadwallader this evening.' That, Mr. Apreece said, was all he requested, and added, that himself and friends would all attend the theatre that night, but expected no infringement to be made on the treaty, either by secret or offensive means, to cause an opposition after the manager's word was given; then wished a good race week, and Apreece and his numerous association departed.

"For some minutes Mr. Baker and I stood and gazed at each other like Gayless and Sharp after Kitty Pry's departure: where one says, 'O Sharp! Sharp!' the other answers, 'O master! master!' But when recovered a little from the dilemma, what was to be done? that was the question! To be or not to be?—for I could not advance forward ('The Author' being a favorite farce) and say, 'A party of gentlemen would not suffer it to be acted, for if it was they threatened a dangerous riot.' Nor could we give out handbills and inform the public a performer was dangerously ill, who might immediately contradict it and assert his being in perfect health: so in council it was agreed to be naturally stupid, say nothing, but substitute 'The Mayor of Garratt,' and proceed with the farce, so changed, without any apology whatever. It certainly was the strangest mode that ever was adopted, or that ever was suffered without momentous consequences, attended with strict inquiry and investigation.

"The first scene between Sir Jacob Jollup and Mr. Lint the apothecary, the *astonished* audience sat, each staring in his fellow's face, like Shakespeare's blacksmith with his hammer up and swallowing a tailor's news, and concluded it was something new by Wilkinson foisted into 'The Author,' but when I was announced as the Major, and made my entrance, the reader will not be surprised when informed I was received with an universal hiss. I took no notice, but went on. The disapprobation continued, but not so virulently as to occasion a standstill; and the reader may be assured we lost no time in getting our work over, but wished for bed-time, and that all were well; for though I owed Heaven a debt, it is clearly evident it was not then due, and I was, like Falstaff, loth to pay before the day. At last the death of that day's life came on, the curtain dropped, and the poor Major Sturgeon sneaked away with marks of anger following at his heels, and slunk to bed to cover himself and his dishonor. So ended the first lesson of the week, where I expected to have outdone my usual outdoings; but the greatest generals have met with disgraces and misfortunes.

"Tuesday I acted 'The Lyar,' which went off wonderfully well; I breathed better than in the morning, and felt once more a little elated. I had fixed on 'The Apprentice' as the entertainment, which the summer before had done much for me in London; but unfortunately it happened to be a favorite part of Mr. Frodsham's (who in truth did not play it well, but quite the contrary), and in that character I failed again, without a single hand to assist. I labored through a part in which, in London, I had been much flattered by applause in the extreme; my imitations were not known in Yorkshire, therefore naturally passed without the least effect. The reader will smile at the pleasant week I had promised myself, but I fed on thin

diet, that of hope, which I doubted not would give a brilliant and good ending after the bad beginning.

"About twelve on the Wednesday, when I had finished the rehearsal of 'The Provoked Wife,' a deputation of gentlemen were sent as ambassadors from the ladies assembled then at Giordani's concert. The gentlemen who came from the rooms informed me and Mr. Baker, that Lady Bingley and all the ladies assembled sent their compliments; they wished that night to make a point of visiting the theatre before they went to the rooms, in order to show every encouragement to the manager; but it was with the proviso that so indecent a play as 'The Provoked Wife' (which the ladies could not by any means countenance) might be changed to another comedy, if their protection and patronage were worth consideration; but if their request was not complied with, they should not on any account enter the theatre, as they would not by any means think of sitting out so improper a representation. The ladies added, that as to the farce of 'The Upholsterer' being altered, it was very immaterial, as very few would continue after the play, but go to the rooms. More comfort still for unfortunate Wilkinson!

"Well, the command, as it might be termed, from the boxes, was likely and necessary to be obeyed, however mortifying it was to me; fresh bills were issued forth with every necessary information of the play being altered, at the universal desire of persons of distinction, to 'Love in a Village.' At that time York races were remarkable for attracting the first families, not only of that immense county, but the kingdom at large; and York was then honored with as many ladies of the first distinction as gentlemen. But oh, what a falling off is there! Oh, woe is me to have seen what I have seen, and seeing what I see! The house was full, and the boxes were much

crowded ; and my only care for the evening was to prepare for the Barber, though most of the ladies and gentlemen would not wait to be SHAVED ; but to those who did I was not much indebted for the compliment of their attendance, as too sure I had Pilgarlick's ill luck again ; for as to my resemblance of Woodward it did not occur to one in a hundred, but it struck the fancy of the million that it was a part that appertained to their favorite Robertson, their darling (and deservedly so, for he was a comedian of true merit). But in regard to my playing the Barber, my dressing like Woodward, I was afterwards informed, was in every article of it contrary to the dress of Mr. Robertson ; and as they pinned their faith upon his sleeve, why he was right, and I was judged wrong in every particular ; therefore absurd and assuming in Wilkinson to attempt Mr. Robertson's part of the Barber ; he would spoil it, and was impudent, ignorant, and deserved chastisement ; and I quitted the stage the third night with an universal hiss and general marks of disapprobation. It was to me a week of perplexity and woe—not pleasure, to so great a man as *I* had fancied myself.

"The next day I accidentally stepped into a milliner's shop, where a little elderly lady sat knitting in the corner, and without once looking at me on my entrance (or if she had she would *not* have known me), said, 'Well, I am sure, Nanny, you never shall persuade me to go to the play again to see that hunch-backed Barber. Give me "The Mourning Bride," and Mr. Frodsham, and then there is some sense in it ; but for that man, that Wilkinson, as you call him, from London, pray let him go back and stay there, for he is the ugliest man I ever saw in my life, and so thought Nanny. I am sure if he was worth his weight in gold he should never marry a daughter of mine.' I turned round to her, and said, 'Dear Madam, do not be so very hard-

hearted—try the theatre once more when *I play*, and I will exert my best abilities to make you amends and deserve your better sentiments.' The old lady stared, down dropped the spectacles, the knitted garters followed (which had busily employed her attention while speaking); and without a single word she took to her heels (which were nimble), and ran away out of the back-door into New Street.

"Not having finished the career of that memorable race week, I must here register that Fortune had not ceased plaguing me with my performance of the Barber; for on the night following Mrs. Centlivre's play of the 'Busy-Body' was acted—Marplot, Mr. Frodsham; to which was added my highly-valued tower of strength, my 'Ville de Paris,' called 'Love à la Mode.' Thundering applause and shouts of expectation had pleasingly disturbed my sleep the night before, with glorious vast ideas, such as expecting thanks, and being the topic of admiring conversation, for the *favor* Mr. Wilkinson had conferred on the town by so good and unexpected a feast as Mr. Macklin's 'Love à la Mode.' Indeed, one material point was gained, for the theatre was crowded in every part. The York audience then were particularly lukewarm as to applause, when compared to any other established theatre. But that serenity is now altered as if the children of another soil—and that sometimes even to the overdoing. More than three plaudits, however their admiration may be raised, in my humble opinion destroys their own dignity, and three is full sufficient for any performer's greediness; beyond, enfeebles instead of strengthening the intended effect.

"But to return to 'Love à la Mode,' in which the first scene being merely introductory, not any applause could have been extorted from any audience; silence and attention was all that could be required, and that was granted. The scene of the Jew (Beau Mordecai) followed next:—

not a smile; as I stood behind the scenes on the very tenter-hooks of expectation my vanity attributed that only to the want of a little rousing and my desired appearance. A rat-a-tat at the stage-door, and now for it! says I. When I entered as Sir Archy, scarcely a hand! My heart sank somewhere—no matter where. I said to myself, for comfort, Assume courage! I tried and tried, but all in vain; the scene dragged and grew more and more dull. Next came Sir Callaghan, whom I was truly glad to see, as it relieved me from a heavy tedious courtship with the lady which did not promise much better success—any change, I trusted would be for the better. They gave applause on seeing Frodsham, and a few simpering smiles gave me a cheerer, and I judged all would be for the better. But when I as Sir Archy and he as Sir Callaghan were left to ourselves in the quarreling scene, which is truly well executed by the author, and very entertaining, instead of peals of laughter which I had assured myself would follow, and to my speeches in particular, the full assemblage before us seemed as if by magnetism charmed into an evening nap—all was hush—they appeared perfectly willing to grant leave for our departure. We ended the act, but not with any honors to grace the remembrance—and indeed by the turn of faces in the boxes, and almost in every other part, it was very perceptible the actors, or the piece, were by no means approved. I, for my own part, as an actor, never felt so severe a disappointment, and wished for the week over, as I could then take my leave of York forever.

"While the music was playing preparatory to the second act, Frodsham flew eagerly to get relief from his fatal and false friend, the brandy-bottle. I was not quite so rash, but was contented with sending for a bottle of Madeira, of which I took large and eager libations. Thus armed (after a tedious music) by the inspiration of the invinci-

ble spirit of wine, I felt bold, and sallied forth once more to take the field. I had to Frodsham confessed myself disappointed and hurt; however, submissive resignation to the decrees of the Fates was indispensable; and as an honest witness on a trial often gives weight to the jury, so did I rest hopes on my Squire Groom's setting all matters right; and I predicted, that when the curtain dropped I should be envious of his receiving all the honors and praises that would, from the part being so applicable to the week, insure good fortune. When Squire Groom made his *entrée* in his new dress and *aw* his pontificalibus, exactly as Mr. King had accoutred himself at London when he acted that part, why even there my hopes were frustrated; for his being dressed as a gentleman who had been riding his own match, gave offence instead of being pleasing to the gentlemen of the turf; it was sneered at as impertinently taking too great a liberty in the race week to have any freedom of character, or even to be permitted to pass, at a time when the whole dependence of the theatre rested on the resort of company that attended York races. Squire Groom's scene was permitted to get through with difficulty—at the end of which, apparent disgust and weariness lessened the audience every minute, and then vanished all my pleasing prospect of profit and applause from my fancied treasure in possessing the celebrated farce of 'Love à la Mode'; and as the people from all parts hastily retired, we were equally quick in bringing about the catastrophe, and were not under much terror or apprehension for the conclusion, as none were left except a few harmless gazers, that neither cared for the audience, the farce, nor the actors, but found themselves in the theatre they scarce knew how, and as peaceably departed they hardly knew why."

He had other powers to conciliate, as will be seen from

the account of his giving offense to the officers of the militia then quartered in the town :—

"I ever worked like a horse at a mill to deserve my engagement, whether in town or country. My benefit was appointed, at my desire, on Monday, October 3. That day, I beg the reader will notice, was the first day of the militia's assembling. My bill of that night was nearly as follows :—'*The last night.*—"The Rehearsal" : Bayes, Mr. Wilkinson. End of the play, by *particular desire*, the principal scene from the new farce called "The Mayor of Garratt" ; the character of Major Sturgeon (of the Westminster militia) by Mr. Wilkinson : also a scene from "The Orators" ; Peter Paragraph by Mr. Wilkinson : with the farce of "The Citizen" ; Young Philpot, Mr. Wilkinson.' Surely I gave them enough for their money, whatever it might want in quality. The house was crowded in every part, particularly the stage, by gentlemen, for want of room in the front of the house. The officers of the new militia were all there, and at their head the ever-entertaining Chace Price, whom I rejoiced to see ; he had sent me a compliment at noon (being my benefit), and was between the acts in great spirits, chatting with me and others. At the end of the comedy of 'The Rehearsal' he desired to wish Mr. Bayes good-night, as he found himself much fatigued with his journey, and expected a severe bout the next day with the bottle at the mess where he was president ; he said he would get a good night's rest, having traveled from London to Shrewsbury without going to bed. On his departure I retired to dress for the new part of Major Sturgeon (the reader will observe that farce was not then in print). On my appearance behind the scenes as the Major, I thought the countenances of several of the officers did not augur a pleasing aspect to my intended performance ; but not supposing any violent anger could

possibly arise without a sufficient cause, hoped I should be made ample amends by the smiling faces and laughing cheeks in front of the theatre. But the new commanders not having been at that juncture in London, when Mr. Foote's 'Mayor of Garratt' was acting, they knew nothing of its fashionable *ton* there, or if they did, would not allow that as a sufficient plea for them, as men of valor, why they should not resent an injurious affront, from what they looked on as an unjustifiable and intentional insult; they therefore one and all pressed so hard and close together at the first wing, where I was to make my entrance, as to prevent the possibility of gaining admittance on the stage; and had not Roger the Bumpkin, servant to the Justice, Sir Jacob Jollup, cried out on the stage, 'Pray ye, gentlemen, pray ye let Major Fish come to visit my master,' they actually would not have suffered me to pass; but from conscious shame and the hissing of the audience, I was at last (but not without much difficulty) permitted to enter; and I verily believe, had they not so pointedly marked their indignation, the bulk of the hearers would have passed the secret over as incomprehensible; but such a remarkable and violent contempt offered to me was easily perceived by them, and once conceived, their ideas swiftly communicated like gunpowder, when I came to the passage where Major Sturgeon relates to the Justice:—

"'On we marched, the men all in high spirits, to attack the gibbet where Gardel is hanging; but turning down a narrow lane to the left, as it might be about there, in order to possess a pig's stye, that we might take the gallows in flank, and at all events secure a retreat, who should come by but a drove of fat oxen for Smithfield. The drums beat in the front, the dogs barked in the rear, the oxen set up a gallop; on they came thundering upon us, broke through our ranks in an instant, and threw the whole corps into confusion.'

"Now, reader, consider, that however *outré* and ridiculous this speech from fancy was formed by the author, Mr. Foote, the whole circumstance had in similarity happened that very day in every ludicrous point; and, in consequence, the offended party swore that particular passage must be the offspring of my own brain, and done as an impudent and intentional disgrace to them; and when the tumult of laughter from the audience allowed permission for me to proceed with—'The Major's horse took fright, away he scoured over the heath. That gallant commander stuck both his spurs into the flank, and for some time held by his mane; but in crossing a ditch, the horse reared up his head, gave the Major a dowse in the chops, and threw that gallant commander into a ditch near the Powder Mills'—the officers were incensed to such a degree that they left the theatre in dudgeon, vowing vengeance. When I was undressed, and prepared to go to my own lodgings, I had information that a sergeant with five or six soldiers were in waiting, with orders, not only to beat unmercifully, but to duck poor Major Sturgeon in the river; so, instead of being lighted home, I acted as servant, after all my fatigue, and lighted others. I got to a house where Mrs. Price and a Mrs. Lewis lived, and ordered the account of the house to be brought there and settled. Mr. Littlehale, a friend of mine, well known at Shrewsbury, was there. Dame Price (my tragedy queen at Portsmouth in 1757) escorted us upstairs; the kitchen had an entrance on each side of the house. She had undertaken as my old acquaintance to look well to my playhouse doors, and with an observant eye mind all was honor bright, where that tempting situation of taking money was transacted—that essential article for real kings, queens, generals, fine gentlemen, and fine ladies; for be it known, there is as much anxiety and suspicion on a benefit night out of London, and it is looked

on as necessary to be as well guarded, as the bank of England when threatened with conflagration and a riot. Any gentleman who holds half an hour's noon conversation with an actor in the country, must have observed the following remarks and answers:—'The house on such a night was not well counted.' 'Such a night the house was not well gathered.' 'The checks were not right.' 'One of the doorkeepers was seen to let up several without taking any money.' 'Another doorkeeper took six shillings, but returned two to prove his honesty.'

"These sayings are often without foundation, but I am afraid at times are known to be *too true*. So Mrs. Price's inspection into the deeds of the doorkeepers, with thinking eyes, was truly necessary; but Mr. Littlehale and I had not regaled an hour before every window below stairs was suddenly broken. The militia officers, at the head of some myrmidons, rushed into the house, and furiously demanded Wilkinson; being assured I neither lodged nor visited there, they retired eagerly through the opposite door of the kitchen in determined search of their destined prey, having been at my lodgings first. However, on their departure I had that great restorative elixir, those golden drops, as Major O'Flaherty says, which healed all my grievances; for out of an old crazy tin and some wooden boxes I poured a plentiful libation of gold and silver coin, the produce of Mexico and Peru, which presented as charming a lava as can be conceived.

"After my incredible fatigues and a comfortable bowl, I got safely to rest, and late the next day attended my good friend Chace Price. He declared he saw me with the utmost regret and chagrin, lamented his early departure from the theatre, as had he stayed he would have effectually put a stop to such brutish outrage; hoped I would think no more of it. If I imagined, he said, that the officers

bespeaking a play with his name at the head would be of service, he would exert all his interest. I told him the accidental affray the night before dwelt on my mind with very disagreeable reflections, as the consequence might have proved dangerous. As to the play the next night, I desired it might be understood I had no advantage from it, nor would I receive any; but as it would certainly serve the company, I accepted it so far as a compliment, and my services that evening he might command. He replied, 'he was obliged to me,' and ordered the players to perform 'The Recruiting Officer,' as the scene lay at Shrewsbury, and desired I would repeat Young Philpot in 'The Citizen.' He appointed Thursday instead of Wednesday; as on the Wednesday he had a venison dinner, and devoted the day to his friends, amongst which number he honored me, and insisted on my dining with him at the Raven on that occasion. I made my compliments in return, and assured him I would attend his summons with infinite pleasure. I was on that day a little after my time, a fault I have been often told of; but on his left hand, at the upper end of the table, the head seat had been purposely reserved for me, and the apparent intimacy and respect he honored me with made the officers stare and think they were in the wrong box, by the contempt they wished to have shown the player. The dinner was good; the wine was good; but Chace Price was superior to both. Mirth went round, enjoying the feast of friendship and the flow of soul. Singing was mentioned; Chace Price said humorously he must first have a rehearsal; for, as his friend Wilkinson was going to leave Shrewsbury in a few days, without one he should be imperfect and forget his part; and begged the favor of me to repeat his favorite scene from the new farce of 'The Mayor of Garratt,' and if I would act the Major, he was certain he could recollect Sir Jacob Jollup, as he

had seen it that summer in London so often; which was strictly true. His memory was excellent.

"Well, we acted the scene, which was highly relished. The good-humored intention was smoked, and it ended with an afternoon and evening all in perpetual harmony; animosity or discord was no more thought of."

Such is a glimpse of an old provincial theatre which in its day nursed many useful performers for the London stage. It had its use, too, in mollifying rustic manners, and imparting at least some elements of taste. In this excellent school, and from such rude trials as have been just described, the comedian learned self-reliance, and found his self-conceit—the bane of the rising actor—wholesomely corrected. Thus prepared, he was ready, when the chance offered, to take a creditable position on the London stage.

We shall now shift the scene to the great metropolitan houses, selecting each episode with a view to its being an illustration of some era in stage life and adventure.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY.* PERIOD—1750–80.

### I.

A BEAUTIFUL woman whose chief attraction is in her beauty, is scarcely seen at her best upon the stage. This may seem a little strange, as it might reasonably be supposed that the position is peculiarly favorable to a display of natural charms. But more is requisite, as will be seen

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* Born 1731, died 1788.

from the system that has recently prevailed, when it has become fashionable for a patron to take a theatre specially for the exhibition of some fair enslaver, who would otherwise have no opportunity of exhibiting her gifts. A glittering framework is thus provided for the picture: in other words the theatre is beautified at a vast expense, and a piece chosen so constructed as to provide for the display of at least one magnificent dress during each act. This rather inartistic system, by a curious law of retribution, is destructive of itself and its principles; for the beautiful woman, who has thus secured an advantage denied to the claims of her own gifts, is thrust into a situation of conspicuous responsibility which she has not strength to support, and the result is failure. This is owing to the ludicrous contrast between the pretentious and glittering surroundings and the feeble talent that is thus unduly adorned, while the experiment invariably fails, as many noble patrons have lately learned at a ruinous cost. It is curious that in France, where there is little regard for public decency, no such proceeding as this would be tolerated, and playgoers would not allow their interest in the stage to be sacrificed to the partiality of a wealthy patron.

In the last century, however, the beautiful woman found her way to the stage on more rigorous terms. The two great theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden offered a long list of stock tragedies and comedies, each an important, well-tried piece whose merits had been set off by a succession of fine actors and actresses. These parts became favorite tests of the abilities of rising players much as Norma and Lucia, Gilda or Valentine, are attempted by candidates on the operatic stage. Such parts become gradually enriched by brilliant traditions, all the varied abilities of successive performers contributing. For one of our modern beautiful women, such a probation would

be utterly disastrous, but in the last century it became an absolute necessity. She might have her patron who would help to secure the *entrée*, but the ability must be forthcoming. And there followed this happy result—that the stage was adorned with charming and attractive figures accompanied with talents of the highest order, while the audience was gratified with the spectacle of beauty and wit united. Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Hartley, Mrs. Baddeley, Mrs. Yates, and Mrs. Bellamy, all adorned the stage and at the same time entertained the public. The pictures of these ladies —their superb dresses, handsome figures full of expression and grace—are singularly interesting; and certainly not the least attractive is the "blue-eyed Bellamy," whose curious story shall now be presented. She was the illegitimate daughter of the Lord Tyrawley who is mentioned in no very complimentary terms by Pope—an old *roué*, who had served with some distinction in both diplomacy and in the wars. The young heroine, George Anne as she was christened, was brought up in a French convent, but her father, who had been appointed ambassador to Russia, announced that he would not support her or her mother any longer. Thus abandoned, by a fortunate accident she attracted the notice of Rich, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who happened to be passing close to where some girls were rehearsing scraps of plays:

"Attracted, as he afterwards said, by the powerful sweetness of the Moor's voice, which he declared to be superior to any he had ever heard, he listened without interrupting our performance; but as soon as it was concluded, he entered the room, and paid me a thousand compliments on my theatrical abilities. Among other things, he said that in his opinion I should make one of the first actresses in the world; adding, that if I could turn my thoughts to the stage, he should be happy to engage me.

"Not a little vain of receiving these encomiums from a person who, from his situation, must be a competent judge, I went home and informed my mother of what had happened. At first she was averse to my accepting the proposal, having experienced herself all the disadvantages attendant on a theatrical life; but Mrs. Jackson uniting her persuasions to those of Mr. Rich, she at length consented. She, however, complied only on conditions that the manager would assure her of his supporting me in a capital line. This Mr. Rich agreed to do.

"At the time I entered into an engagement with Mr. Rich Is wa just fourteen; of a figure not inelegant, a powerful voice, light as the gossamer, of inexhaustible spirits, and possessed of some humor. From these qualifications he formed the most sanguine hopes of my success, and determined that I should immediately make trial of them. I had perfected myself in the two characters of Monimia and Athenais, and, according to my own judgment, had made no inconsiderable proficiency in them. The former was fixed on for my first appearance.

"Mr. Rich now thought it time to introduce me to Mr. Quin, then the most capital performer at Covent Garden; and capital he was, indeed, in those characters which his figure suited. This gentleman, at that period, governed the theatre with a rod of iron. Mr. Rich, though the proprietor, was, through his indolence, a mere cipher. After waiting some time at the door of the lion's den, as the people of the theatre had denominated Mr. Quin's dressing-room, we were at length admitted. It is necessary here to observe that this gentleman never condescended to enter the green-room, or to mix with the other performers, all of whom he was unacquainted with, except Mr. Ryan, for whom he entertained a particular friendship which lasted till Mr. Ryan's death.

"He no sooner heard Mr. Rich propose my appearing in the character of Monimia, than with the most sovereign contempt he cried out, 'It will not do, sir!' Upon which the manager, to his infinite surprise, replied, 'It shall do, sir!' I was so frightened at Mr. Quin's austere deportment, that had he requested me to give him a specimen of my abilities, it would not have been in my power. But he held me too cheap to put me to the trial. After some further altercation had passed, which was not much in my favor, Mr. Quin at last deigned to look at me, saying at the same time, 'Child, I would advise you to play Serina before you think of Monimia.' This sarcasm roused my spirits, which before were much sunk, and I pertly replied, 'If I did, sir, I should never live to play the Orphan.'

"It may be supposed that this conversation was not very pleasing to me. As for Mr. Rich, the opposition he met with seemed to increase his resolution, and taking me by the hand, he led me out of the dressing-room, assuring me aloud, that, let who would oppose, he would protect me; and would let every one in the company know that he would be the master of it, when he chose to be at the trouble. Before he quitted the scenes, he ordered the prompter to call a rehearsal of 'The Orphan' the next morning. When that hour arrived, the two gentlemen who were to play my lovers, Castalio and Polydore, in order to pay their court to Mr. Quin, did not think proper to appear. Mr. Rich, however, to convince them he would be obeyed, fined them more than the usual mulct. Even Serina, who was only an attendant upon tragedy queens, smiled contemptuously on the poor Orphan.

"Mr. Rich kindly endeavored, by every means in his power, to support me under this mortifying opposition; and he took a very effectual method of doing it. The dresses of the theatrical ladies were at this period very dif-

ferent. The empresses and queens were confined to black velvet except on extraordinary occasions, when they put on an embroidered or tissue petticoat. The young ladies generally appeared in a cast gown of some person of quality; and as at this epoch the women of that denomination were not blest with the taste of the present age, and had much more economy, the stage brides and virgins often made their appearance in altered habits, rather soiled. As the manager had in his juvenile days made the fair sex his principal study, and found the love of dress their darling foible, he concluded that, as a true daughter of Eve, I was not exempt from it. He therefore thought there could be no better method of putting me in a good humor with myself, and compensating for the affronts I had lately received, than by taking me to his mercer's, and permitting me to choose the clothes I was to appear in.

"The following morning Castalio and Polydore attended the rehearsal, but my brother Chamont was inexorable. Mr. Hale *mumbled over* Castalio, and Mr. Ryan *whistled* Polydore. This gentleman, from the accident of having been shot in the mouth by ruffians, had a tremor in his voice, which till you were accustomed to it, was very disagreeable. But from his utility in playing every night, the discordance of it grew familiar to the ear, and was not so displeasing.

"Mr. Ryan might truly have been denominated, in the theatrical phrase, a *wear-and-tear* man; that is, one who has constant employment, and fills a part in almost every piece that is performed. This frequently occasioned his coming late to the theatre. I have known him come at the time the last music has been playing; when he has accosted the shoeblack at the stage door in his usual tremulous tone (which it is impossible to give those an idea of

on paper that never heard it, but those who have will easily recollect it) with 'Boy, clean my shoes.'

. . . . . .

"As soon as this needful operation has been performed, he has hastened to his dressing-room, and having hurried on an old laced coat and waistcoat, not a little the worse for wear, a tye-wig pulled buckishly over his forehead, and in the identical black worsted stockings he had on when he entered the house, ordered the curtain to be drawn up. Thus adorned, he would then make his appearance in the character of Lord Townley; and, in the very tone of voice in which he had addressed his intimate of the brush, exclaim,

Why did I marry; was it not evident,' &c.

. . . . . .

And in the same harsh monotony did that gentleman speak every part he played.

"It will likewise be seen from it, that the dress of the gentlemen, both of the sock and buskin, was full as absurd as that of the ladies. Whilst the empresses and queens appeared in black velvet, and, upon extraordinary occasions, with the additional finery of an embroidered or tissue petticoat; and the younger part of the females in cast gowns of persons of quality, or altered habits rather soiled—the male part of the *dramatis personæ* strutted in tarnished laced coats and waistcoats, full bottom or tye-wigs, and black worsted stockings.

"The dreaded evening at length arrived. Previous to it, Mr. Quin having in all companies declared it as his opinion that I should not succeed, Mr. Rich, on the contrary, having been as lavish in my praise, the public curiosity was much more excited than if there had been no contention about me. The curtain drew up to a splendid audience, which seldom happened at Covent Garden

Theatre, except when a new or revived pantomime was represented.

"It is impossible to describe my sensations on my first entrance. I was so much dazzled by the lights and stunned by the repeated plaudits, that I was for some time deprived both of memory and voice. I stood like a statue. Till compassion for my youth, and probably some prepossession for my figure, and *dress*, which was *simply elegant*, a circumstance not very customary, induced a gentleman who was dictator to the pit, and therefore ludicrously denominated Mr. Town (Mr. Chitty), to call out, and order the curtain to be dropped till I could recover my confusion.

"This caused Mr. Quin to exult so much, that Mr. Rich entreated me in the most earnest manner to exert my powers. But his entreaties were ineffectual; for when I made the next attempt my apprehensions so totally overpowered me, that I could scarcely be heard in the side boxes. The applause, indeed, was so universal, during the first act, for what did not reach the ears of the audience, that, had I possessed my full powers of exertion, they could not have profited by them.

"The manager having pledged himself for my success, he had planted all his friends in different parts of the house, to insure it. But when he found that I was unable to raise my spirits, he was as distracted as if his own fate, and that of his theatre, had depended upon it.

"He once more had recourse to persuasion and encouragement; but nothing could rouse me from my stupidity till the fourth act. This was the critical period which was to determine my fate. By this criterion was I, as an actress, to stand or fall. When, to the astonishment of the audience, the surprise of the performers, and the exultation of the manager, I felt myself suddenly inspired. I blazed out at once with meridian splendor; and I ac-

quitted myself throughout the whole of this most arduous part of the character, in which even many veterans have failed, with the greatest *éclat.*

"Mr. Quin was so *fascinated* (as he expressed himself) at this unexpected exertion, that he waited behind the scenes till the conclusion of the act; when, lifting me up from the ground in a transport, he exclaimed aloud, 'Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee!' The audience, likewise, honored me with the highest marks of their approbation. As for Mr. Rich, he expressed as much triumph upon this occasion as he usually did on the success of one of his darling pantomimes.

"The performers, who, half an hour before, had looked upon me as an object of pity, now crowded around me to load me with compliments of gratulation. And Mr. Quin, in order to compensate for the contempt with which he had treated me, was warmer, if possible, in his eulogiums than he had been in his sarcasms."

II.

"I had, at this period, the happiness to acquire the approbation and patronage of two ladies of the first distinction—the late Duchess of Montague, then Lady Cardigan, and her Grace of Queensberry. Both these ladies favored me with their support, so far as to grace the theatre whenever I performed—an attention which was the more flattering, as the latter had not honored a playhouse with her presence since the death of her favorite Gay.

"Some days before that fixed for my benefit, I received a message, whilst I was at the theatre, to be at Queensberry House the next day by twelve o'clock. As I thought it likewise incumbent on me to wait on the Countess of Cardigan, who had honored me with equal marks of approbation, I dressed myself early, and, taking a chair, went

first to Privy Garden. I had there every reason to be pleased with the reception her Ladyship gave me, who joined politeness to every virtue.

"But at Queensberry House, my reception was far otherwise. Her Grace was determined to mortify my vanity, before she promoted my interest. Quite elated with Lady Cardigan's flattering behavior, I ordered the chairmen to proceed to Queensberry House. Soon after the rat-tat had been given, and my name announced to the porter, the groom of the chambers appeared. I desired him to acquaint her Grace, that I was come to wait upon her. But how was I surprised, when he returned and informed me, that her Grace knew no such person! My astonishment at this message was greatly augmented by the certainty I entertained of a ready admittance. I assured the domestic that it was by the Duchess's own directions I had taken the liberty to wait on her. To which he replied, that there must have been some mistake in the delivery of it. In this mortifying situation I had nothing to do but return home. Ludicrous and humiliating as the foregoing scene must be, I cannot avoid relating it, as it may serve as a lesson to many, who too readily give way to the impulses of vanity. Young minds are naturally prone to it. Mine consequently was. And this well-timed rebuke, however grating, was the greatest proof of regard her Grace could have given me.

"I went home with no very pleasing sensations, as I expected to receive the taunts of a female relation upon the occasion, who had lately arrived from Ireland, and on whom my mother doted. As this person will be frequently mentioned in the course of my narrative, and was the cause of many of the inconveniences I afterwards suffered, it may not be amiss to acquaint you, that her deformed body was a fit receptacle for her depraved mind.

"Upon my entering the green-room, I was accosted by Prince Lobkowitz, who was then there in a public character, requesting a box at my benefit, for the *corps diplomatique*. After thanking his Highness for the honor intended me, I informed him that they might be accommodated with a stage box; and sending for the house-keeper, desired he would make an entry in his book to this purpose. But how great was my surprise, when he acquainted me I had not a box to dispose of; every one, except those of the Countess of Cardigan, the Duchess Dowager of Leeds, and Lady Shaftesbury, being retained for her Grace the Duchess of Queensberry. I could not help thinking but the man was joking, as he himself had delivered me the message from her Grace the night before, and that I found to be a deception. He however still persisted in what he said, and further added, that the Duchess had likewise sent for two hundred and fifty tickets. This made me more at a loss to account for the cavalier treatment I had received in the morning.

"His Highness Prince Lobkowitz condescended to put up with a balcony for himself and friends; and I hastened home, at once to make known to my mother my good fortune, and to retaliate upon my inimical relation. To add to my satisfaction, when I got home, I found a note from her Grace, desiring I would wait upon her the next morning. This being such an evident proof of my veracity, which it had given me inexpressible uneasiness to have doubted, I experienced proportionable pleasure from it.

"I was, notwithstanding, so apprehensive of meeting with a second mortification, that I determined to *walk* to Queensberry House; to prevent any person's being witness to it, should it happen. I accordingly set out on foot, and was not totally free from perturbation when I knocked at the gate. I was, however, immediately ushered to her

Grace's apartment, where my reception was as singular as my treatment had been the day before. Her Grace thus accosted me: 'Well, young woman! What business had you in a chair yesterday? It was a fine morning, and you might have walked. You look as you ought to do now (observing my linen gown). Nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in a morning. Simplicity best becomes youth. And you do not stand in need of ornaments. Therefore dress always plain, except when you are upon the stage.'

"Whilst her Grace was talking in this manner to me, she was cleaning a picture, which I officiously requested her permission to do; she hastily replied, 'Don't you think I have domestics enough if I did not chose to do it myself?' I apologized for my presumption by informing her Grace that I had been for some time at Jones's, where I had been flattered that I had acquired a tolerable proficiency in that art. The Duchess upon this exclaimed, 'Are you the girl I have heard Chesterfield speak of?' Upon my answering that I had the honor of being known to his Lordship, she ordered a canvas bag to be taken out of her cabinet, saying, 'No person can give Queensberry less than gold. There are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the Duke's tickets and mine; but I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake.' She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which having put into my hands, she told me her coach was ordered to carry me home, lest any accident should happen to me, now I had such a charge about me.

"Though the conclusion of her Grace's whim, as it might justly be termed, was more pleasing than the beginning of it, and her munificence much greater than that of the Countess of Cardigan, yet I must acknowledge I was much better pleased with the reception I met with from her Ladyship, who honored me with her protection whilst I continued on the stage.

"My benefit surpassed my most sanguine expectations. And as I had by this time many who professed themselves my admirers, they had, upon this occasion, an opportunity of showing their generosity without offending my delicacy.

"Among those who paid me the greatest degree of attention was Lord Byron, a nobleman who had little to boast of but a title and an agreeable face; and Mr. Montgomery, since Sir George Metham. As I would not listen to any proposals but marriage and a coach,* Mr. Montgomery honestly told me, early in his devoirs, that he could not comply with the first, as his only dependence was on his father, whose consent he could not hope to procure; and as for the latter, he could not afford it. Having come to this *éclaircissement*, he immediately retired into Yorkshire. The generous conduct of this gentleman (whose passion I was well convinced was sincere) in not attempting to deceive me, made an impression upon my mind greatly in his favor.

"Lord Byron still pursued me; and as his vanity was hurt at my rejecting him, he formed a resolution to be revenged of me for my insensibility. His Lordship was very intimate with a person who was a disgrace to nobility; and whose name I shall conceal through tenderness to his family. This nobleman was Lord Byron's confidential friend; and to this friend Lord Byron committed the execution of his revenge.

"His Lordship frequently called at Mrs. Jackson's, though much against my mother's inclinations. But as he had been constantly a dangler behind the scenes during her engagement at the theatre, and had occasionally given her franks, she admitted his visits. My mother had strictly enjoined me to break off my intimacy with the young lady

* The reader will note the business-like character of this record.

who was the object of the Earl's pursuit, on account of her levity; and because, though by birth a gentlewoman, she had degraded herself by becoming the companion of a lady of quality who had frequently eloped from her lord.

"My mother at this period was become a confirmed devotee. Religion engrossed so much of her time, that in the evening she was seldom visible. Upon this account, and from Mrs. Jackson's accompanying me so frequently to Mr. Quin's suppers, that lady conferred a great part of the friendly regard she had once borne my mother to me. But alas! I was not to profit long by this revolution. My happiness was to be as transient as the sunshine of an April day.

"One Sunday evening, when this ignoble Earl well knew my mother would be engaged, he called to inform me that the young lady before mentioned was in a coach at the end of Southampton Street, and desired to speak with me. Without staying to put on my hat or gloves, I ran to the coach; when, to my unspeakable surprise, I found myself suddenly hoisted into it by his Lordship, and that the coachman drove off as fast as the horses could gallop.

"My astonishment for some time deprived me of the power of utterance; but when I was a little recovered, I gave free vent to my reproaches. These his Lordship bore with a truly philosophic indifference, calmly telling me that no harm was intended me; and that I had better consent to make his friend Lord Byron happy, and be happy myself, than oppose my good fortune. To this he added that his friend was shortly to be married to Miss Shaw, a young lady possessed of a very large fortune, which would enable him to provide handsomely for me. I was so struck with the insolence of this proposal that I remained for some time quite silent.

"At length the coach stopped in a lonely place at the top of North Audley Street, fronting the fields. At that time Oxford Street did not extend so far as it does at present. Here the Earl got out, and took me into his house. He then went away, as he said, to prepare a lodging for me, which he had already seen at a mantua-maker's in Broad Street, Carnaby Market, and to which he would come back and take me. He assured me the mistress of the house was a woman of character; and added, with the most dreadful imprecations, that no violence was intended.

"His Lordship now left me. And as the fear of great evils banishes every lesser consideration, I determined to wait the result with all the patience I was possessed of. The dread of being left alone in that solitary place, was nothing when compared with my apprehensions from the machinations of two noblemen so determined and so powerful. Terror, however, so totally overwhelmed my mind that I remained in a state of stupefaction.

"It was not long before his Lordship returned; and with him came the person I least expected to see—my own brother. Good heavens! what comfort, at so critical a juncture, did the sight of him afford me! I instantly flew into his arms; but was repulsed by him in so violent a manner that I fell to the ground. The shock of this unexpected repulse, just as I hoped to have found a protector in him, was more than my spirits were able to bear. It deprived me of my senses. On my return to sensibility, the only object that presented itself to my view was an old female servant, who told me she had orders to convey me to the lodging which had been prepared for me.

"The first thing I did was to make inquiry concerning my brother's coming so unexpectedly. I was informed by the old woman that he had bestowed manual chastisement upon my ravisher. But as he seemed to suppose that I had

consented to the elopement, he had declared he would never see me more, but leave me to my fate. The woman added that he had threatened the Earl and his associate with a prosecution, which had so intimidated her master that he had given her orders to remove me out of his house as soon as possible; as my being found there might make against him.

"When we arrived in Broad Street, I discovered, to my great satisfaction, that the mistress of the house, whose name was Mirvan, worked for me as a mantua-maker, though I was till now unacquainted with her place of residence. I told her my story simply as it happened; and my appearance, as well as my eyes, which were much swelled with crying, was an undeniable testimony of the truth of my assertions.

"I afterwards learned the following circumstances relative to my brother, about whom I was more anxious than for myself, as I had a great affection for him. We had long expected him to return from sea, he having been abroad for some years; and by one of those extraordinary freaks of fortune which are not to be accounted for, he got to the top of Southampton Street just as the coach was driving off with me. I should have termed his coming providential, had he not suffered his suspicions to get the better of his affection, and thus counteracted the apparent designs of Providence in affording me relief.

"He had reached Southampton Street, as I have just said, nearly about the time I was forced into the coach; and ran to rescue the person thus treated, little imagining it was his own sister: but the furious driving of the coachman rendered his designs abortive. Upon this he proceeded to Mrs. Jackson's house, and had scarcely inquired for me, than that lady cried out, 'Oh fly, sir, to her relief; Lord ——— has this moment run away with her.' My

brother hearing this, concluded I must have been the person he had just seen carried off. But knowing it would be impossible to overtake the coach, he thought it more prudent to go directly to the Earl's house. Not finding him at home, he walked about within sight of the door, till his Lordship returned, when he accosted him in the manner before related. From the Earl of ———'s, my brother went to Marlborough Street to Lord Byron's; and accusing him of being concerned with the Earl in seducing his sister, his Lordship denied having any knowledge of the affair, which he solemnly asserted *upon his honor;* declaring at the same time, as indeed he could do with a greater degree of truth, that he had not seen me that evening.

"My brother, placing an implicit confidence in the assertions of Lord Byron, grew enraged against me, without making any inquiries whether I was really culpable upon this occasion or not. Giving me over, therefore, as a lost abandoned girl, he immediately set out for Portsmouth, and left me unprotected. This I may justly consider as the most unfortunate event I had hitherto experienced; for, being deprived of his protection at a time when it was so extremely requisite to my re-establishment in life, I was left open to the attacks of every insolent pretender, whose audacity his very character, as he was distinguished for his bravery, would have repressed."

III.

After the scandal of this episode had subsided, the heroine accepted an engagement at Dublin; and the picture of life and stage manners then presented is highly characteristic. The brutality of the fashionable gentlemen of the day is unpleasantly conspicuous:—

"As soon as I was recovered from the fatigue of my journey, I went to pay my respects to Mrs. O'Hara, Lord

Tyrawley's sister, who had not seen me since I was an infant. To my great grief I found her blind. She was much pleased with my visit, but she did not greatly approve of the profession I had chosen. However, as I went by the name of my mother's husband, to which alone I had a right, being born after their marriage, my engagement in the theatrical line could not bring *public* disgrace on her family. She, notwithstanding, proposed herself to introduce me to all her acquaintance as *her niece;* which she accordingly did, as the acknowledged daughter of Lord Tyrawley.

"Mrs. O'Hara kindly inquired into the state of my finances, which gave me an opportunity of making her acquainted with the Duchess of Queensberry's liberality to me, and likewise with the mortification I had received from her Grace at the same time; with which she seemed much entertained. I even informed her of the event which had been the cause of so much unhappiness to me. It is an established maxim with me, never to rest satisfied with gaining the good opinion of any person by halves. In the afternoon the honorable Mrs. Butler and her daughter were announced. Mrs. O'Hara introduced me as her niece, and added an eulogium which I by no means merited; and as this lady was a leading woman in the fashionable world, had great interest, and her house was frequented by most of the nobility, Mrs. O'Hara solicited her protection for me. Mrs. Butler was elegant in her figure, and had been very pretty, of which there were still some remains; but the decay of her beauty appeared to be more the result of indisposition than age. Her daughter was handsome, spirited, sensible, and good-humored. She was nearly of the same age with myself, and seemed, even at this first interview, to have contracted a partiality for me, which I reciprocally wished to cultivate. Before

the ladies took their leave, they engaged my aunt and me to come the next day to Stephen's Green to dine and spend the evening.

"When I returned home, I found our fellow-traveler, Mr. Crump, *tête-à-tête* with my mother. She informed me that Miss St. Ledger, one of the three ladies I had become acquainted with some years before at Mrs. Jones's, had called and requested to see me the next morning, at Lady Doneraile's, in Dawson Street. Thus, from having no female acquaintance in London, except my own family, I was now *en train* to be introduced into the first circle in Dublin. The next morning I went to breakfast with Miss St. Ledger, by whom I was received with all that politeness she so eminently possessed, actuated by the cordial warmth usually felt by the susceptible on embracing a loved intimate after a long absence. She inquired in the kindest manner after Miss Conway; and was much affected at hearing that her friend was in a declining state of health, occasioned by her constant attendance on the Princess of Wales, to whom she was a Maid of Honor, which prevented her from taking the necessary steps for her recovery. She pressed me to stay to dinner, but when I informed her that I was pre-engaged, and told her by whom, she politely said she was then happy, even in being deprived of my company; as the acquaintance of Mrs. Butler was the most desirable of any in Dublin, and would prove most agreeable and beneficial to me. She at the same time much regretted that she was deprived of the pleasure of frequenting that lady's house, which was occasioned by some umbrage her aunt, Lady Doneraile, with whom she resided, had given her.

"My reception at the Green, when I went to dinner, was of the most flattering kind. It exceeded even my warmest hopes; and Mrs. Butler avowed herself my pa-

troness, notwithstanding she had not yet had an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge whether I really deserved that honor. When I took leave, she obligingly requested that I would pass every hour, not appropriated to the business of the theatre, at her house; which you may be assured I did not fail readily to promise.

"The theatre opened with *éclat*. And what was very fortunate for me, the Earl of Chesterfield was at that time Viceroy. Mr. Barry had made some figure on this stage the preceding winter, in the character of Othello; and upon my being engaged, the manager wrote to him to study that of Castalio, as he proposed I should early appear in 'The Orphan.' To add to our success, Mr. Garrick joined the company this season. Having some dispute with the proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre, and Mr. Rich declining to give him the terms he required, he came to Dublin. Three such capital performers as Garrick, Sheridan, and Barry, in one company, was a circumstance that had scarcely ever happened. I was obliged to appear almost every night; and sometimes in characters very unfit for me. The great applause that I received, however, spurred me on, and excited in me the strongest endeavors to deserve it. And that I might at once pay a proper attention to the duties of my profession, and have time to enjoy the society of my new friends, I scarcely allowed myself even that portion of rest which nature requires. A good constitution, however, and inexhaustible spirits, enabled me to go through the season.

"After some time, the tragedy of 'King John' was proposed, wherein Roscius and the manager were to appear together, and play alternately the King and the Bastard. Upon this occasion Mr. Sheridan insisted on my playing Constance; whilst Mr. Garrick objected to it, as there would then be no person to play Prince Arthur, but the

late Mrs. Kennedy, at that time Miss Orpheur, who was nearly of the same age as myself, and from being hard-favored looked much older.

"Upon Mr. Garrick's absolute rejection of my appearance in the character on which I had set my heart, and for the performance of which I had stipulated in my articles, I flew to my patroness, Mrs. Butler, to complain of the breach of them. Notwithstanding her partiality for Mr. Garrick, so highly did I stand in her favor, that she immediately sent round to all her friends, to request they would not go to the play the evening it was performed. Besides the consequence of family and fortune, this lady possessed very great power in the genteel world. To this may be added, that as she frequently gave balls, all the young ladies that were usually invited were always ready to oblige her in any request of this nature, to insure themselves a place at those entertainments. And every one of these readily obeyed, and spread abroad her injunctions. The house, on the night 'King John' was performed for the first time, was, of course, very thin. The receipts did not amount to forty pounds.

"This was the first theatrical humiliation the immortal Roscius ever met with; and he severely repented preferring Mrs. Furnival, who played the character of Constance, to my little self. But what completed my triumph was, that when the same play was again performed, and Mr. Sheridan played the King, Garrick the Bastard, and myself Constance, more people were turned away than could get places; and the dispute relative to the characters which had lately happened made the audience receive me with the warmest marks of approbation.

But notwithstanding this success, I was determined to return the mortification Mr. Garrick had been the cause of to me, the very first opportunity that presented itself;

and it was not long before one offered. This LITTLE *great man* was to have two benefits during the season; and, that they might not come too near each other, it was agreed that he should have one of them early in it. He had fixed on 'Jane Shore' for his first benefit; and on application being made to me to perform that character, I absolutely refused it, alleging the objection he had made to my playing Constance, namely, my youth. Finding that entreaties were ineffectual, he prevailed on Mrs. Butler to make use of her interest with me; sensible that I could not refuse the solicitations of a lady to whom I was bound, not only by the ties of gratitude, but those of policy. And whilst he made this application, that he might leave no method of obtaining my consent untried, he wrote me a note at the same time, which occasioned the following laughable incident, and furnished conversation for the whole city of Dublin.

"In his note he informed me, 'that if I would oblige him, he would write me a *goody-goody* epilogue; which, with the help of my eyes, should do more mischief than ever the flesh or the devil had done since the world began.' This ridiculous epistle he directed 'To my soul's idol, the beautified Ophelia;' and delivered it to his servant, with orders to bring it to me. But the fellow having some more agreeable amusement to pursue than going on his master's errands, he gave it to a porter in the street without having attended to the curious direction that was on it. The porter, upon reading the superscription, and not knowing throughout the whole city of Dublin any lady of quality who bore the title either of 'My Soul's Idol,' or 'The beautified Ophelia,' naturally concluded that it was intended to answer some jocular purpose. He accordingly carried it to his master, who happened to be a newsman; and by his means it got the next day into the public prints. The

inditer of this high-flown epistle, it must be supposed, was not a little mortified at its publication. Nor was my mother, who was always awake for my reputation, without her alarms, lest it should injure my character; but that, thank Heaven, was too well established to be endangered by so ridiculous an accident.

"After a reconciliation between Mr. Garrick and myself had been effected, he visited much oftener at Colonel Butler's than usual. The Colonel had a seat on the sea-coast, not many miles from Dublin; and my mother thinking that bathing in the sea would be of great benefit to my health, she took a furnished house at the Sheds of Clontarf for that purpose. She fixed on this spot, that I might at the same time be near my much-loved companion, Miss Butler; between whom and myself as inseparable a connection had taken place as if it had been cemented by the ties of blood.

"At the conclusion of the season, Mr. Garrick prepared to return to England with the rich harvest that had crowned his toils. Mrs. Butler, who had a taste for wit, was as fond of his company as her amiable daughter was of mine. Some days before Mr. Garrick's departure for England, as Mrs. Butler, her daughter, myself, and some other company, were walking on the terrace, we had the satisfaction to see the much-admired hero come galloping up to the house. He soon joined us; and to the great regret of us all, particularly Mrs. Butler, announced his intention of leaving Dublin the next day. Whilst we were engaged in conversation, the lady of the house went away abruptly; but soon returned, bearing in her hand a sealed packet, which she delivered to Roscius, thus addressing him at the same time: —'I here present you, Mr. Garrick, with something more valuable than life. In it you will read my sentiments; but I strictly enjoin you not to open it till you have passed the

Hill of Howth.' We all looked surprised at this extraordinary presentation, especially Colonel Butler's chaplain, who was one of the party. As the lady inclined somewhat to prudery, and had always appeared to be governed by the most rigid rules of virtue, we could none of us guess the purport of the present, though her conduct seemed to admit of a doubtful interpretation. But Garrick, who was as conscious of possessing nature's liberal gifts as any man breathing, took the packet with a significant graceful air; concluding, without hesitation, that it contained not only a valuable present (the giver having the power as well as the disposition to be generous), but a declaration of such tender sentiments as her virtue would not permit her to make known to him whilst he remained in the kingdom.

"After dinner Mr. Garrick took his leave, and he was no sooner departed, than Mrs. Butler informed the company that the contents of the valuable packet with which she had presented her visitor, were nothing more than 'Wesley's Hymns,' and 'Dean Swift's Discourse on the Trinity'; adding that he would have leisure during his voyage to study the one and to digest the other. You may be assured that we all enjoyed the joke. As for my own part, I could scarcely keep my risible faculties in any order, when my imagination presented to me Garrick's disappointment at finding the contents of the packet so very different from what he had concluded them to be. I must inform you that at our next meeting Mr. Garrick acquainted me, that upon opening the packet, and seeing what it contained, he was so much chagrined, that he, in the most heathenish manner, offered them up a sacrifice to Neptune. In plain English, he threw both Mr. Wesley and the Dean, cheek-by-jowl, into the sea. . . .

"Early in the season (1746) the tragedy of 'All for Love, or The World Well Lost,' was revived; in which

Barry and Sheridan stood unrivaled in the characters of Antony and Ventidius. The getting it up produced the following extraordinary incidents. The manager, in an excursion he had made during the summer to London, had purchased a superb suit of clothes that had belonged to the Princess of Wales, and had been only worn by her on the birth-day. This was made into a dress for me to play the character of Cleopatra; and as the ground of it was silver tissue, my mother thought that by turning the body of it in, it would be a no unbecoming addition to my waist, which was remarkably small. My maid-servant was accordingly sent to the theatre to assist the dresser and mantua-maker in preparing it; and also in sewing on a number of diamonds, my patroness not only having furnished me with her own, but borrowed several others of her acquaintance for me. When the women had finished the work, they all went out of the room, and left the door of it indiscreetly open.

"Mrs. Furnival (who owed me a grudge on account of my eclipsing her, as the more favorable reception I met with from the public gave her room to conclude I did; and likewise for the stir which had been made last season about the character of Constance) accidentally passed by the door of my dressing-room, in the way to her own, as it stood open. Seeing my rich dress thus lying exposed, and observing no person by to prevent her, she stepped in and carried off the Queen of Egypt's paraphernalia, to adorn herself in the character of Octavia, the Roman matron, which she was to perform. By remarking from time to time my dress, which was very different from the generality of heroines, Mrs. Furnival had just acquired taste enough to despise the black velvet in which those ladies were usually habited. And without considering the impropriety of enrobing a Roman matron in the habiliments of the

Egyptian Queen, or perhaps not knowing that there was any impropriety in it, she determined, for once in her lifetime, to be as fine as myself, and that at my expense; she accordingly set to work to let out the clothes which, through my mother's economical advice, had been taken in.

"When my servant returned to the room, and found the valuable dress that had been committed to her charge missing, her fright and agitation were beyond expression. She ran like a mad creature about the theatre, inquiring of every one whether they had seen anything of it. At length she was informed that Mrs. Furnival had got possession of it: when, running to that lady's dressing-room, she was nearly petrified at beholding the work which had cost her so much pains undone. My damsel's veins, unfortunately for Mrs. Furnival, were rich with the blood of the O'Bryens. Thus qualified, she at first demanded the dress with tolerable civility; but meeting with a peremptory refusal, the blood of her great forefathers boiled within her veins, and without any more ado, she fell tooth and nail upon poor Mrs. Furnival. So violent was the assault, that had not assistance arrived in time to rescue her from the fangs of the enraged Hibernian nymph, my theatrical rival would probably have never had an opportunity of appearing once in her life adorned with *real* jewels.

"When I came to the theatre, I found my servant dissolved in tears at the sad disaster, for, notwithstanding her heroic exertions, she had not been able to bring off the cause of the contest. But so far was I from partaking of her grief, that I could not help being highly diverted at the absurdity of the incident. Nothing concerning a theatre could at that time affect my temper, except the disappointment I had met with in not appearing in the part of Constance, as before related. I sent, indeed, for the jewels, but the lady, rendered courageous by Nantz, and the pres-

ence of her paramour Morgan, who was not yet dead, condescended to send me word that I should have them after the play.

"In this situation I had no other resource than to reverse the dresses, and appear as plain in the character of the luxurious Queen of Egypt as Antony's good wife, although the sister of Cæsar, ought to have been. In the room of precious stones, with which my dress should have been decorated, I substituted pearls, and of all my finery I retained only my diadem, that indispensable mark of royalty.

"Every transaction that takes place in the theatre, and every circumstance relative to it, are as well known in Dublin as they would be in a country town. The report of the richness and elegance of my dress had been universally the subject of conversation for some time before the night of performance, when, to the surprise of the audience, I appeared in white satin. My kind patroness, who sat in the stage-box, seemed not to be able to account for such an unexpected circumstance. And not seeing me adorned with the jewels she had lent me, she naturally supposed I had reserved my regalia till the scene in which I was to meet my Antony.

"When I had first entered the green-room, the manager, who expected to see me splendidly dressed, as it was natural to suppose the enchanting Cleopatra would have been upon such an occasion, expressed with some warmth his surprise at a disappointment, which he could only impute to caprice. Without being in the least discomposed by his warmth, I coolly told him, 'that I had taken the advice Ventidius had sent me by Alexis, and had parted with both my clothes and jewels to Antony's wife.' Mr. Sheridan could not conceive my meaning; but as it was now too late to make any alteration, he said no more upon the subject. He was not, however, long at a loss for an explana-

tion; for, going to introduce Octavia to the Emperor, he discovered the jay in all her borrowed plumes. An apparition could not have more astonished him. He was so confounded, that it was some time before he could go on with his part. At the same instant Mrs. Butler exclaimed aloud, 'Good Heaven, the woman has got on my diamonds!' The gentlemen in the pit concluded that Mrs. Butler had been robbed of them by Mrs. Furnival; and the general consternation occasioned by so extraordinary a scene is not to be described.* But the audience observing Mr. Sheridan to smile, they supposed there was some mystery in the affair, which induced them to wait with patience till the conclusion of the act. As soon as it was finished they bestowed their applause upon Antony and his faithful veteran; but, as if they had all been animated by the same mind, they cried out, 'No more Furnival! No more Furnival!' The fine-dressed lady, disappointed of the acclamations she expected to receive on account of the grandeur of her habiliments, and thus hooted for the impropriety of her conduct, very prudently called fits to her aid, which incapacitated her from appearing again, and the audience had the good-nature to wait patiently till Mrs. Elmy, whom curiosity had led to the theatre, had dressed to finish the part. But the next night, either inspired with the brilliancy of my ornaments, or animated by the sight of his Excellency Lord Chesterfield, who, together with his Lady, graced the theatre, it was the general opinion that I never played with so much spirit, or did greater justice to a character. The applause I received was universal.

"A gentleman who stood near the stage door, took a very unallowable method of showing his approbation.

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* Remarks of this kind from the audience were part of the theatrical license of the time. The whole is a most curious picture.

Being a little flushed with liquor, or otherwise I am persuaded he could not have been capable of the rudeness, he put his lips to the back of my neck as I passed him. Justly enraged at so great an insult, and not considering that the Lord Lieutenant was present, or that it was committed before such a number of spectators, I instantly turned about, and gave the gentleman a slap on the face. Violent and unbecoming as this sudden token of resentment appeared, it received the approbation of Lord Chesterfield, who rose from his seat and applauded me for some time with his hands; the whole audience, as you may suppose, following his example. At the conclusion of the act Major Macartney came, by order of his Excellency, to Mr. St. Leger (that was the gentleman's name), requesting that he would make a public apology for this forgetfulness of decorum; which he accordingly did. I have reason to believe that this incident contributed, in a great measure, to a reform that Mr. Sheridan, with great propriety, soon after made. Agreeable to this regulation, no gentlemen, in future, were to be admitted behind the scenes. . . .

"Not long after as I was performing the part of Lady Townley, in 'The Provoked Husband,' I received a card from Mrs. Butler, wrote in a servant's hand, requesting me to come to her house as soon as I should be at liberty. As the note was delivered to me during the performance of the play I had only leisure just to send verbally, with my compliments, that the fatigue of the evening would prevent me from being able to do myself that honor.

"Had I attended to the circumstance of the card being written by a servant, I must have been convinced that something was wrong; as my dear friend Miss Butler was always happy in seizing every occasion to write to me. It, however, passed unnoticed. Not long after, I received another note, informing me that I must absolutely come

the moment I had finished, and even without waiting to change my dress. So very pressing an invitation I own excited my curiosity, and made me impatient for the conclusion of my business.

"My task being done, I got into my chair in the same dress in which I had played the character of Lady Townley, and hastened away to Stephen's Green. As the dress I wore was a modern one, there was no great impropriety in my appearing with it off the stage. Just as I entered one door of the parlor in which Mrs. Butler and her female visitors were, the Colonel, and several gentlemen, who had just risen from their bottle, were ushered in at the opposite one. The company was numerous; and the elegance of my dress attracted the attention of all the gentlemen; but not one of the ladies condescended to speak to me. Even the lady whose guest I was only deigned to welcome me, on my entrance, with a formal declination of her head.

"A reception so different from what I had been accustomed to in that hospitable mansion, not only surprised, but greatly shocked me. In this agitation of mind, I made up to Mrs. O'Hara, who was present, and requested she would inform me what was the occasion of it. The answer I received from her was that a few minutes would determine whether she should ever notice me again.

"A gentleman now made his *entrée*, whose figure—shape, dress, and address exceeded everything I had ever beheld before. The ladies, notwithstanding, continued to look as serious and demure as a convocation of old maids met on purpose to dissect the reputation of a giddy, thoughtless young one. Nor did this beautiful stranger, with all his attractions, seem to be less neglected than myself. From being in such company, and in such a splendid dress, for my head was adorned with the jewels

of my patroness, the gentleman might naturally conclude that I was a person of quality.

"From this motive, or some other, his attention appeared to be fixed on me, in preference to any of the other ladies; and he introduced himself to me with an air so easy and confident, that I knew immediately that he had traveled. He acquainted me that he was just returned from making the *grand tour*, and was come to take possession of his estate, and settle for the remainder of his days in Ireland. We then entered into conversation on different subjects, in which I acquitted myself with more ease than I expected I could have done in a state of such suspense.

"The test intended for the discovery of some dubious points, which will presently be known, having now been carried on as long as necessary, Miss Butler was sent to put a stop to our *tête-à-tête*, when my Ganymede, whose curiosity had been on tiptoe to find out who I was, went to the upper end of the room to make the needful inquiries of the lady of the house. Having in a whisper asked the question, Mrs. Butler answered aloud, 'Surely you must know her. I am certain you know her; nay, that you are well acquainted with her.' The gentleman, not a little disconcerted at this want, in a lady of fashion, of what is usually termed *au monde*, that is, among other things, replying to a whisper in an audible voice; assuring her, still in a low tone, that he had never seen me before, and now felt himself greatly interested in the inquiry. 'Fie, fie, Mr. Medlicote,' returned my patroness, 'what can you say for yourself, when I inform you, *that this is the dear girl whose character you so cruelly aspersed at dinner?*'

"I now plainly perceived, that this accomplished gentleman, vain of his attractive graces, had boasted, like too many others, of favors he had never received, not knowing

that he did so in the presence of my best friends, and that there was a certainty of his false assertions being detected. The pencil of Hogarth alone could justly depicture the confusion of the gentleman at this discovery of his treachery; or of my petrifaction at finding myself the subject of his slander. It for some time totally deprived me of the use of every faculty. Till at length my patroness kindly relieved me from the situation in which I was absorbed. Coming up to me, she took me by the hand, and with a smile on her countenance thus addressed me: 'My dear child, you have gone through a fiery trial; but it was a very necessary one. This gentleman has vilely traduced your character. We were all perfectly convinced that you did not merit what he said of you; but had he seen you first at the theatre instead of here, he would, doubtlessly, have maintained his assertions with oaths, and there would then have been no possibility of contradicting him, however favorably we may have thought of you, notwithstanding.' Having said this, she embraced me in the most cordial manner. And as soon as I got from her embrace, I ran and threw myself into the arms of my dear aunt, who seemed to feel the utmost satisfaction at my triumph.

"As for my traducer, it may be supposed he did not long disgust us with his company. Charming and accomplished as he was, there did not appear to be a wish among us all to detain him.

"In the morning, after a restless night, I found myself in a fever. My friends were greatly alarmed. Mrs. Butler and her beloved daughter did me the honor to pay me a visit, and my absence from the theatre was considered as a general calamity. My indisposition increased; and it was several days before I was able to attend at the theatre. When I did so, a disagreeable event happened, which retarded my perfect recovery, and, with some other con-

current circumstances, was the cause of my leaving Ireland.

"Mr. Sheridan, in consequence of the insult I had received from Mr. St. Leger, as before related, and on account of the inconveniences arising from the custom, had given a general order at the doors of the theatre, and notice in all public papers, that no gentleman was, on any account, to be admitted behind the scenes. It happened one night, just as I was so far recovered as to venture to the house, but not to perform, that an officer, who had more wine in his head than humanity in his heart, insisted on passing the sentry placed at the stage door. The poor fellow persisting in his refusal of admittance, the officer drew his sword and stabbed him in the thigh, with so much violence, that the weapon broke, and left a piece in the most dangerous part. Hearing a riot on the stage, I ran from the box in which I sat, and flew in my fright to the next sentinel for protection. This happening to be the man who had been wounded, I found myself in a moment encompassed by numbers, and was obliged to be a witness to the broken steel being taken out. The unexpectedness of this scene and the terrors I was thrown into by it, as I was not perfectly restored to health, were productive of a relapse. The man, however, happily recovered through the placidness of his disposition; but having lost the use of his leg, the offender, who was a man of quality, provided for him for life.

"I have already observed that Mr. Sheridan was held in high estimation by the people of Dublin. The young gentlemen belonging to the college looked upon him as a divinity. The ladies of his acquaintance flattered him; and his own vanity misguided him."

He revived the play of "Æsop" for the new season.

"There was no doubt but Mr. Sheridan, who must be

allowed to be the best declaimer that ever trod our stage, would have made a very capital figure in a character which was so conspicuously marked out for his talents, had not the performance been interrupted on the first night of its representation. The house was so much crowded, that a person, I will not so far degrade the title of gentleman as to bestow on him that appellation, finding himself inconveniently situated in the pit, got over the spikes which divided that part from the stage. This removal received marks of approbation from many of the audience, who by no means approved of the new regulation, which debarred them from coming behind the scenes. Mr. Kelly (that was the person's name) was not a little pleased that he had escaped from his confined situation, and at the same time showed by his manœuvre an appearance of courage, which he was conscious he did not really possess.

"Elevated with his success, he made his way to the green-room. Having heard much of the liberties taken by the gentlemen with the performers, during the time that they were admitted behind the scenes, I had adopted Mr. Quin's mode of confining myself to my dressing-room. But being apprehensive that I was not perfect in a scene which was mostly lines, and which I was to repeat in the next act, I went into the green-room to request Mrs. Dyer to run it over with me.

"When I entered the room, I observed that lady to be greatly confused, and that she could not move out of an arm-chair in which she sat, from a man's impeding her. She whispered me as I drew near, that Kelly had most grossly insulted her. Upon which, not considering the brutality of a drunken man, particularly of an illiterate Irishman when drunk, I asked her why she stayed to hear him. I had no sooner said this, than I observed I had offended the brute, and accordingly ran out of the green-

room into my dressing-room, which adjoined to it. When I got in, I prudently locked the door, judging that a wretch who could dare to insult a woman with an indelicate conversation, would dastardly strike or misuse any of the sex on a supposed offence. It was a very providential circumstance that I had pursued this step; for I had scarcely done so, when Kelly pursued me, and attempted to force the door; at the same time swearing vengeance against me. The noise which Kelly made at my dressing-room door alarmed the audience, and drew the manager to inquire into the cause of it. Finding Kelly thus riotously disposed, he desired him to quit the scenes. The other refusing, Mr. Sheridan ordered him to be turned out by force. He now found room in the pit, as several of the manager's friends, on hearing the disturbance, had left their places, and gone into his room to learn the occasion of it. The play proceeded till we were come to the first scene of the last act, when an orange or apple was thrown at Mr. Sheridan, who played the character of Æsop, and so well directed, that it dented the iron of the false nose which he wore, into his forehead.

"Mr. Sheridan was not only born and bred a gentleman, but possessed as much personal courage as any man breathing. It may, therefore, be supposed, that he would not put up with such an indignity. He went forward, and addressed the audience, or the person that was supposed to throw it; but what he said, my fright prevented me from hearing. The curtain was then dropped, and the piece left unfinished. The foolish being who had occasioned this confusion, Kelly, now went to the manager's room to demand satisfaction. And this he immediately gave him in the most ample manner, with an oak stick which, as Æsop, he had carried in his hand during the performance; whilst Kelly, to the great entertainment of such of Mr.

Sheridan's friends as were present, fell upon the ground in tears, crying out at the same time, that he should severely repent this usage to a gentleman. To the disgrace of the military (for he wore a cockade during this humiliating scene), Mr. Kelly had a sword by his side.

"When the manager had given Kelly this severe correction for his insolence and brutality, he suffered him to crawl away, for walk he could not, to Lucas's Coffee House. As soon as he got there, he claimed the compassion of the company; and having informed them how ill he had been used, to interest them the more in his favor, falsely added, that Mr. Sheridan had had the audacity to declare that he was a better gentleman than any one who had been that night at the theatre. It is necessary to acquaint you, that Lucas's Coffee House is the place to which the Irish gentlemen usually resort to decide, in an honorable way, their quarrels. Whilst the combatants retire into the yard to acquire glory, the rest of the company flock to the window, to see that no unfair advantages are taken, and to make bets on which of them falls first. And of these combats, I can assure you, there are not a few; the Hibernians being extremely captious; and very often ready to take offence where none is intended. You must 'speak by the card' amongst them, or a quarrel will ensue. They are possessed of many good qualifications, but this seems to be one of the foibles of the country.

"It is not to be wondered at, that persons of this cast should be easily excited to enter into any proposal which seemed likely to be productive of a riot. More especially, as most of the frequenters of Lucas's at that time had a natural antipathy to all learning except that kind of knowledge which enabled them to distinguish good claret from bad. They therefore one and all agreed to sally forth, to lay siege to Smock Alley Theatre, and sacrifice the pre-

sumptuous manager of it for having forfeited the name of gentleman, by appearing upon the stage. They likewise had another excitement, which was no less powerful with persons of their liberal way of thinking; and that was his having had the misfortune to have had a classical education, which he had greatly improved by application and intense study.

"Mr. Sheridan not supposing any persons could be found weak enough to abet such a cowardly being, imagined the affair was over at least for that night; and he had retired, to enjoy himself with some of his friends. The theatre was also shut up. The heroes, however, made a brave assault against it, and strove to force the doors. But finding them too strongly barricaded to hope for success, they retired.

"The next evening the 'Fair Penitent' was to be performed for the benefit of a public charity. Notwithstanding which, upon the appearance of Mr. Sheridan in the character of Horatio, *the Bucks*, as they termed themselves, immediately arose, and cried, 'Out with the ladies and down with the house.' It is impossible to describe to you the horrors of a riot at a Dublin theatre. The consternation and fright which it occasioned among the ladies, with whom the stage was exceedingly crowded, is beyond conception. Husbands and brothers were busily employed in taking care of their wives and sisters; and all was a scene of confusion.

"Mr. Sheridan was early advised by his friends to quit the house; but he would not hear of it. However, when the rioters leaped upon the stage, and threatened his life, he found a retreat absolutely necessary for the preservation of it. Had he not prudently taken this step, those sons of Bacchus would certainly have put their threats into execution; for they broke open every door in the house, to find

the offender, as they called him. These dastardly ruffians broke open the wardrobe, and as they could not find the manager, they revenged themselves upon the stuffing of Falstaff, which they stabbed in many places.

"In their researches they did me the honor of a visit. Two gentlemen of quality having joined the rioters out of curiosity, one of them Mr. Edward Hussey, now Lord Beaulieu, the other Mr. Mirvan, they came to the door of my dressing-room, and very politely told me, they were come to protect me from insult. But apprehending them, in my fright, to be leaders of the mob, and finding that the rioters were determined to leave no part of the theatre unsearched, instead of returning thanks for their politeness, as I should have done, I answered with some acrimony, 'that my room was an improbable place to find the person they wanted, as I certainly should not undress, was there a gentleman in it.'

"Upon this Kelly advanced, and mistaking me, as I imagined, for Mrs. Dyer, said I was the person who had occasioned all the disturbance. And I don't know whether I should have escaped further insult had I not, in a resolute tone of voice, ordered them to quit the room. To this at length they consented, upon being permitted to lift up the covering of my toilette, to see whether the manager was there. As soon as they were departed I hurried to my chair, and Mr. Hussey had the humanity to walk by the side of it, to see me safe home. And I was never more rejoiced in my life than when I found myself secure within the doors.

"The magistrates having reason to apprehend that greater mischief would ensue if the theatre continued open, ordered it to be shut up till the benefits commenced. The affair, however, did not end here; for the College boys, as they are usually termed, in order to revenge the cause of their

fellow student, as well as to show their resentment at being deprived of their favorite amusement, took it into their heads to pay Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Kelly, and several other ringleaders of the rioters a morning visit, and obligingly invited them to partake of a breakfast at their college; where they bestowed as much cold water upon them from their pumps, as served to keep their heads perfectly cool to defend their cause against the manager, who had commenced the same day a prosecution against them."

## IV.

The heroine now prepared to fly from these troubles and to return to London. Connected, however, with her stay in Dublin was a little incident which introduces those famous beauties, the Gunnings, who were later to perform on a more brilliant stage. They had "cut" their humbler companion, and the actress was at no pains to conceal her resentment against the old friends who had neglected her.

"After the account I gave you in my last, can you wonder, madam, at my being less pleased with the profession I was engaged in, than I was when youth and inexperience presented to my view only the pleasing side of it; or that I grew tired of a country where I was subject to such continual alarms?

"I am now about to mention an incident in my life, which relates to persons who have made a very conspicuous figure in the great world. As I was returning one day from rehearsal, at the bottom of Britain Street, I heard the voice of distress. Yielding to an impulse of humanity, I overleaped the bounds of good breeding, and entered the house from which it proceeded. When I had done this, led by an irresistible attraction, I entered without ceremony the parlor, the door of which appeared to be guarded by persons not at all suited to those within. I here found a woman of

a most elegant figure, surrounded by four beautiful girls, and a sweet boy of about three years of age. After making the necessary apologies for my abrupt intrusion, I informed the lady, that as the lamentations of her little family had reached my ears as I passed by, I had taken the liberty of a neighbor to inquire if I could render her any service.

"Mrs. Gunning, for that was the lady's name, arose immediately from her seat, and calling me by my name, thanked me for the offer of my assistance, complimenting me at the same time upon possessing such humane sensations. She then informed me, that having lived beyond their income, her husband had been obliged to retire into the country, to avoid the disagreeable consequences that must ensue. That she had been in hopes that her brother, Lord Mayo, listening to the dictates of fraternal affection, would not suffer a sister and her family to be reduced to distress; but that his lordship remained inflexible to her repeated solicitations. The ill-looking men, I now found, had entered the house by virtue of an execution, and were preparing to turn her and her children out of doors.

"Upon this, Mrs. Gunning and myself went upstairs to consult what was best to be done in so disagreeable a predicament. We there determined that I should return home, and send my man-servant, who was to wait under the window of the drawing-room in the evening, and bring to my house everything that could be thrown to him. It was further agreed, that as my mother and I had more room than we could conveniently occupy, the children and their servant should remain with us, whilst she went to her husband to assist him in settling his affairs. The whole of our plan being carried into execution, Miss Burke, Mrs. Gunning's sister, a lady of exemplary piety, who had passed her probation in the community of Channel Row, sent shortly after for the two youngest girls, and the two eldest were permitted,

to my great pleasure, to remain at our house. As the beauty of these ladies has since made so much noise in the world, and has been so recently imprinted on the memory of every rank, it will be unnecessary here to give a description of them. I shall, therefore, only observe, that the eldest, Maria, the late Countess of Coventry, was all life and spirits; and that Miss Betty, the younger, now Duchess of Argyll, &c., &c., with a longer train of noble titles than perhaps ever woman enjoyed before her, was more reserved and solid.

"Here I must beg your permission to relate to you a singular anecdote concerning the ladies who have given rise to the foregoing reflection, and myself, which I have lately recollected. I say, *beg your permission;* because, whilst the incident seems to carry with it the appearance of great *credulity* in me, the relation of it here will look as if I expected to find some degree of the same propensity in you.

"But as the fact really happened, and I can vouch for the truth of it, I will give you the circumstances of it, just as they arose, without endeavoring to account for a preference, the verity of which has since been confirmed with the most extraordinary punctuality. Her Grace of Argyll, who was one of the *trio*, will, I doubt not, readily recollect the adventure.*

"The eldest Miss Gunning, conscious of her charms, even at that early period of her life, and wishing to know whether they would procure her that elevation which her youthful vanity taught her to hope for, prevailed upon me to accompany her and her sister Betsy to a sybil, alias a

* The point of this sarcastic reminder will be evident when it is remembered that "her Grace of Argyll" was living when these memoirs were published.

female fortune-teller, who from some lucky discoveries she had made (probably from her having privately acquired a knowledge of the parties) was considered as an oracle throughout the whole city of Dublin. So great was the fame she had acquired by her reputed skill in prognostication, that she was dubbed with the pre-eminent title of *Madam Fortune*, as if she was the blind directress of events herself, or her immediate representative.

"That we might avoid, as much as possible, giving the prophetess any clue by which to judge of our real situation in life, we all three habited ourselves in mean attire, and instead of going in the carriage, *walked* to her house. To add to the deception, I put on a wedding-ring, which I had borrowed of a friend for that purpose.

"Upon Miss Molly's being ushered into her presence, she, without any hesitation, told her that she would be *titled* (so she expressed herself), *but far from happy*. When Miss Betsy appeared, she declared that she would be *great to a degree*, and that she would be happy in the connections which conduced to that greatness; but from a want of health (which alone can give value either to riches or grandeur), she would find a considerable abatement to that happiness. When your humble servant presented herself, she said I might take off the ring I wore, as I never was, nor ever would *be married*, unless I played the fool in my old age. To this she added, that opulence would court me and flattery follow me; notwithstanding which, through my own folly, I should be brought to indigence.

"I will not, as I said before, pretend to account for this extraordinary instance of anticipating future events; but a retrospection of the five preceding volumes of my life will prove that the old sybil happened to be right in her predictions of the future fate of my two visitants, as well as myself. But so little heeded by me were the admonitions

they ought to have conveyed, that I thoughtlessly ran on the rock I was cautioned to beware of, and unhappily split upon it. . . .

"During the winter, 'Romeo and Juliet' being bespoke by some persons of quality, Lady Coventry (late Miss Maria Gunning), with some other ladies of the first distinction, were in the stage-box. I have already mentioned my intimacy with this beautiful woman, when she was a girl, and the circumstances which occasioned it. But I had not seen her since that time, except a few days before her marriage, when she did me the favor to call upon me, on a little pecuniary business.

"In the scene where Juliet drinks the supposed poison, just as I was got to the most interesting part of that soliloquy, it was interrupted by a loud laugh, which issued from the box where her Ladyship sat. The silent attention in which the rest of the audience were enrapt made such a circumstance the more striking. It had so great an effect upon me, that, being wholly disconcerted, and unable to proceed, I was obliged to request leave to retire till I could collect myself. The audience were offended at the interruption this levity had occasioned, and insisted upon the ladies quitting the box, which they accordingly did.

"A gentleman in the side-boxes reproached Lady Coventry with her rudeness and ingratitude. Upon which she was pleased to say she could not bear me since she had seen Mrs. Cibber. As this was no other than my brother, Captain O'Hara, he aloud made her Ladyship a retort, but not the *retort courteous*. This added to mortify her vanity, and hastened her departure. The late Lord Eglington, one of the politest men of his time, who was of the stage-box party, came into the green-room to make an apology. And this he did by assuring me that no offence was meant to me; the laugh that Lady Coventry had broke out into

being involuntary, and excited by her twirling an orange upon her finger, and some ridiculous thing that was said upon the occasion. I admitted the excuse, and finished my part with as much approbation as ever.

"The next morning my brother came, and informed me of what her Ladyship had foolishly uttered. Upon which I rang for the house steward, and delivering him the note she had given me, when Miss Gunning, for the money she had borrowed of me a few days before her nuptials, I ordered him to go with it to Lord Coventry's for payment.

"Quince waited till her Ladyship came in from riding; when presenting the note to her, she returned it, saying, 'What! is it Mrs. Bellamy the *actress?*' To which my domestic, who daily saw me treated in a different manner by ladies greatly her superiors, answered that it was, and that I expected the money to be paid. Upon which, turning upon her heel, her Ladyship said, 'If she is impertinent, I will have her hissed off the stage!' The man, unaccustomed to such treatment, replied, 'That continuing on the stage was a matter of indifference to his mistress; but if she chose to perform, it was not in her Ladyship's power to prevent it.' Having said this, he left the house, as he saw there was no probability of succeeding in his errand. He, however, had not got far, before a servant followed, and informed him that the money should be sent shortly.

"But from that hour I never heard anything more of or from her Ladyship concerning the money. Indeed, I had not the least expectation of ever getting it again when I gave it her, nor should I have taken the note from her, had she not forced it upon me. Such a trifle, at that period, was of very little consequence to me. And as resentment never made me any long visits, finding my heart an unfit receptacle, I placed it to account with former favors, and

thought no more about it. I was much displeased with myself at having been hurt at a folly, of which her Ladyship had given so many instances. Had I time and inclination, I have room here to add a supplement to these remarks on the scarcity of gratitude, which Dr. Francis's *grateful* conduct excited. I shall, however, only refer you to them, and leave you to make the application. And to show how very different the lady's sentiments had formerly been, I send you a copy of a letter I once received from her, and which bears this singular address: 'To Miss Bellamy in England.' As it is much defaced by time,* there are several breaks in it, but it is given in its present state, and at the same time, *verbatim et literatim.*

"'I Rec$^{d}$ my Dearest Miss Bellamy Letter at Last: after her long silence, indeed I was very Jealous with you, but you make me amen's in Letting me hear from you now, it gives me great Joy & all our faimely to hear that y$^{r}$ D$^{r}$ mama and your Dearest self are in perfict Health to be sure all y$^{r}$ Relations where fighting to see which of them should have you first and Longest with y$^{m}$. I hope you are a most tird of england, and that we shall soon have your sweet company in Ireland, where you will be heartily welcome, it gives me vast pleasure to hear you haves thoughts of coming over, my Lady — — — To be sure I dont wonder at it, for you know her heart and soul was rapit up in his, as to hows bing the next heir I believe it will be how my Lord pleases, he is in ye Country & my Lady is with us she cant go to her own house I belive she will go strait to england to Miss Bour, I was very unfortunate to be in the country when our Vaux Hall was, if I was in Town I sho'd be thear & I believe I should be much more delighted than at a publicker devertion, I am quit alterd since I saw you,

* The original is in the hands of the publisher.

there is nothing I love so much as solitude; I dont believe it was Mr, knox you read of at Bath, fot he is hear and pray write me word when you saw or heard from Mr. Crump. —— is out Town this tew months past every —— in the Country, Dublin is y^e^ stupites place —— in the world I hope ye winter will be more —— tho I see no great Liklihood of it, for I believe Shredian can get know body to play with him is doing all he can to get frinds for him sef to be sure you haye hread he is marrd for sirtain to Miss Chamberlan a sweet pare,

"'Papa & mama & Miss Betty & Miss Kittys sincer love and comp^ts^ to y^u^ & y^r^ mama y^r^ Littel Husband sends you ten Thousand kisses he whisses he had you hear to give y^m^ to you he says they w^d^ be swe —— Lipes than on paper without making —— Comp^ts^ he shakes me so I cant write — Miss Bellamy will excuse this—

"'I must bid a due & shall only say I am my D^r^ your ever affec^nat^.

"'M. GUNNING.

"'Dublin August 31.

"'M^rs^ Judy begs leave to give her Comp^ts^ to you, & is rejoyes'd to hear you are well, she is in a very bad state of health.'"

Miss Wynne also records a special instance of their ungraciousness to an old Dublin friend. All accounts indeed show that the beauties were rather unamiable. Boswell's amusing scene at Inverary Castle with the Duchess of Argyll—who exhibited a resentment that was almost a violation of the duties of hospitality—is familiar to every reader. "The lady of quality" writes:—

"Mrs. Gunning consulted Sheridan as to what she should do with her two beautiful but penniless daughters.

He recommended that they should be presented at the Castle; here a great difficulty occurred: by what possible means were they to procure court dresses? This Sheridan obviated: he was at that time manager of the Dublin Theatre, and offered them a loan of the stage dresses of Lady Macbeth and Juliet. In these they appeared most lovely; and Sheridan, after having attended the toilet, claimed a salute from each as his reward. Very soon after this a most diabolical scheme was formed by some unprincipled young men. They invited Mrs. Gunning and her two daughters to dinner, and infused strong narcotics in the wine, intending to take advantage of the intoxication which must ensue to carry off the two young women. Fortunately, Sheridan discovered their base designs, and arrived just in time to rescue the ladies. He lived to see one of these girls Duchess of Argyll, and the other Countess of Coventry; and, it is melancholy to add, lived to see his application for admission to their parties rejected.

"Lady Coventry enjoyed one very singular triumph. Having one day casually mentioned to the king, that she could not walk in the Mall because the crowd who came to gaze at her pressed round her in a way that was quite alarming, his Majesty gallantly exclaimed that the finest woman in England should not be prevented from gracing the Mall. He desired that whenever she wished to walk she would send notice to the captain upon guard, and at the same time ordered that she should be attended by a sergeant's guard. She walked several times with this train: of course the crowd increased; but they were prevented from pressing upon her, and her vanity, which was excessive, must have received the highest gratification in this singular distinction."*

* These stories of the Gunnings might be amply confirmed from contemporary accounts. Horace Walpole states that they borrowed court

But Mrs. Piozzi tells a more curious story. "A Mr. Head," she says, "whose real name was Plunkett, a low Irish parasite, dependent on Mr. Thrale primarily, and I suppose, secondarily on Mr. Murphy, was employed by them in various schemes of pleasure, as you men call profligacy: and on this occasion was deputed to amuse them by personating some *lord*, whom his patrons had promised to introduce to the beautiful Miss Gunnings when they first came over with intent to make their fortunes. He was received accordingly, and the girls played off their best airs, and cast kind looks on his introducers from time to time, till the fellow wearied, as Johnson says, and disgusted with his ill-acted character, burst out on a sudden as they sate at tea and cried, 'Catamaran! young gentlemen with two shoes and never a heel: when will you have done with silly jokes now? Leddies;' turning to the future peeresses, 'never mind these merry boys; but if you really can afford to pay for some incomparable silk stockings, or true India handkerchiefs, *here they are now:*' rummaging his smuggler's pocket; but the girls jumped up and turned them all three into the street, where Thrale and Murphy cursed their senseless assistant, and called him *Head*, like *lucus a non lucendo*, because they swore he had none. The Duchess (of Hamilton), however, never did forgive this impudent frolic; Lady Coventry, more prudently, pretended to forget it."

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dresses from Peg Woffington, to attend a drawing-room at the Castle, Dublin, and writes thus of them in 1751: "There are two Irish girls of no fortune, who are declared the handsomest women alive. I think there being two so handsome, and both such perfect figures, is their chief excellence, for, singly, I have seen much handsomer figures than either: however, they can't walk in the park, or go to Vauxhall, but such mobs follow them that they are therefore driven away."

## V.

Returned to London, the heroine was presently surrounded by admirers who besieged her with their addresses —Mr. Metham, Count Haslang, one of the foreign ambassadors, Mr. Calcraft, Mr. West Digges (a well-known actor of the day, who was in some cloudy way connected with the Delawarr family), and even the Right Hon. Mr. Fox, afterwards Lord Holland. The lady, it must be said, was not very cruel to this varied list of worshipers, and chronicles her various embarrassments with the naïveté of a persecuted maid. It is, however, a curious illustration of the tone of the times that she should have counted among her patronesses many ladies of rank and *ton*, though the warm interest that was taken in her might be accounted for by a certain simplicity of nature that was observed in her, combined with a sort of rustic piety that appeared to be genuine. This simplicity is seen in her singular account of an engagement she entered into with the most persevering of these suitors, the eminent contractor, Mr. Calcraft, who appears to have been a singularly odious character. She relates how this gentleman dispatched an emissary of his own with his proposals. "This gentleman went on to inform me, that Mr. Calcraft, in whose praise he launched out, had it not in his power to marry me immediately, as his dependence on Mr. Fox prevented him from doing so. But that the paper he held in his hand was the copy of a contract of marriage, in which Mr. Calcraft had engaged, under the forfeiture of fifty thousand pounds, to make me his wife, within the term of six or seven years; in which time, from every appearance, there was no doubt of his acquiring such an independency as would enable him to avow his situation. But at present he could not suffer the ceremony to be performed, as his patron had enjoined him,

upon pain of his displeasure and the loss of his support, not to enter into a serious engagement with a woman in public life. Therefore, though he loved me to distraction, he had too great a regard to his honor, which he had pledged to his patron, to purchase even me at the expense of it. As things were in such a situation, he had thought of this method as the only one by which he could secure *me*, and keep his own word.

"I heard, with patience, Mr. Gansel repeat his visitor's reasons for his present conduct: but he had no sooner done so than I expressed, in the strongest terms, my dissatisfaction to the latter, at his taking the liberty of troubling either Mr. Gansel or myself upon the subject. I then assured him, that I was firmly resolved never to form any connection whatsoever, and desired he would let me hear no more of his addresses. I was now about to leave the room, when Mr. Calcraft, who was visibly affected at my determination, stepped between me and the door, and endeavored to prevent me from going.

"Offended at this freedom, passion got the better of good manners, and, I am almost ashamed even at this distant period to indite it, I struck him. The thought of having demeaned myself so much, operated so forcibly on my mind, that I burst into tears; and I felt myself more confounded at having given the blow, than Zanga did at receiving one. Mr. Calcraft vented his feelings in sighs and groans; and the old gentleman was almost distracted."

Her admirer however long persevered, and, at last, the lady consented. "The contract was immediately executed; and, except the omission of the ceremony, our nuptials were solemnized to the satisfaction of all parties, *but my poor self*. The old gentleman was as happy and as proud of his having succeeded in the negotiation, as if he had

married a darling daughter to an hereditary prince. As for myself, I still, like the patriarch's dove, longed to return to the home where all my happiness had so long been deposited; and had I known the *real* situation of the man that had offended me, instead of waiting for his submission, I should myself have produced the olive branch, and have sued for peace. When we returned to town, the contract was left with Mr. Gansel, as a place of the greatest security, and as being lodged in the hands of one of my most zealous friends."

After suffering for some time from this man's ill-treatment, she naïvely professed to be amazed at the discovery that he had all this time been secretly married, and that her own extraordinary engagement became thus invalidated. Harassed with anxieties, she was seized with a dangerous illness, and reduced to the point of death. That a contract of the kind had been entered into, there can be no doubt, as the incident presently became one of the scandals of the time. She printed an appeal to the public, with a copy of the engagement, which Mr. Calcraft succeeded in suppressing at the time, though it appeared later.

VI.

The eccentric course of her adventures was diversified with little incidents that curiously illustrate the manners of the day and the customs of the stage. She thus tells the story of the "Chicken Gloves."

"I must here entertain you with an humorous instance of my vanity's being humbled; and which, though it may extort a smile from you, had like to have cost your humble servant very dear.

"Having received some ridiculous compliments upon the beauty of my hand, and my vanity not being a little augmented thereby, I determined to try every art in my power

to render it more conspicuously white, and more worthy of the praises that had been bestowed upon it. Accordingly, in order to attain this grand point, which I then thought of the utmost consequence, I sent to Warren's, the perfumer, *for a pair of chicken gloves.*

"When I had obtained these wonder-working coverings, I drew them on as I went to rest; and with some difficulty prevailed on Clifford to fasten my hands to the bed's head, to accelerate the wished-for effect. Thus manacled, and pleasing myself with the expectation of finding my project succeed, I fell asleep. But, O dire to tell! I had not become the vassal of Morpheus above two hours, when I awoke, and found that I had totally lost the use of my right hand.

"Alarmed by the accident, I hastily called my maid, who lay in an adjacent room, to come and unshackle me; and finding, when my arms were at liberty, that my apprehensions were too true, I ordered her to send immediately for one of the faculty. In about half an hour, a gentleman came; and upon being informed of the terrible calamity that had befallen me, and the dreadful disappointment I had experienced, he, laughing, told me, that he would take such methods as should effectually cure my white hand. And this he executed according to the letter of his promise: for he applied to my arm a mustard blister, which extended from my shoulder to my finger's end. An application that was not only attended with excruciating pain, but was productive of great mortification; for both the public and myself were debarred from the pleasure of viewing the beauty I so much prided myself in for a long time, as I was obliged to wear gloves during the remainder of the winter."

Again; the audiences of the time were more independent than they are at present, and took a more direct share in

the business of the stage. Our heroine had recently broken her arm—

"Mr. Rich," she says, "was very pressing for me to come to town. At length I found myself so well recovered as to attend the duties of the theatre. The first character I made my appearance in was that of Rutland, in the 'Earl of Essex.' When I came to the mad scene, I threw myself on the floor as usual; and, in order to prevent my late fractured arm from receiving any injury from the fall, I fell on my right side instead of my left. Mrs. Clive, who was in the boxes, observing this, her good-nature got the better of her recollection, and she cried out, 'O, she has broken her other arm!' The audience took the alarm, and, still honoring me with their favor, called out, with a kind concern, for the curtain to be dropped. But finding, by my agility in rising, that I had not hurt myself, they suffered me to proceed."

Of all the queens of the stage, perhaps, there is no such dramatic figure as that of Mrs. Woffington. Her good-nature, her boldness, wit, dramatic talents, and beauty, combine to make her a most interesting character, and her story, a contribution to the romance of the stage. In Wilkinson's Recollections she figures pleasantly, but the simple and graceful tribute paid to her by one of her own profession has a deeper significance than pages of lengthy panegyric.

"To her honor be it ever remembered," says the Prompter of the Dublin Theatre, "that whilst thus in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees, it made no alteration in her behavior; *she remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to every one around her.* She had none of those occasional illnesses which I have sometimes seen assumed by capital performers, to the great vexation and loss of the manager,

and disappointment of the public; she always acted four times each week.

"Not the lowest performer in the theatre did she refuse playing for; out of twenty-six benefits, she acted in twenty-four, and one of the other two was for Mrs. Lee, who chose to treat the town with an exhibition of her own Juliet. Such traits of character must endear the memory of Mrs. Woffington to every lover of the drama."*

But such a heroine, flattered, courted and perhaps a little spoiled, would naturally feel intolerant of a rival. She could put on scornful moods, when she thought a contemptible mimic had dared to make free with her peculiarities, and she was not likely to be indulgent to a beautiful woman like Bellamy who disputed the throne with her. The former regarded her with the bitterest hostility, and the two ladies had an open quarrel which excited the amusement of the town, and set the pens of the wits at work. The story of their jealousies is most amusing.

"Mr. Rich had been advised to revive Lee's tragedy of 'Alexander,' as the character of that hero would suit the powers and show the person of Barry to singular advantage. The parts of the rival queens he judged would be likewise well filled by Mrs. Woffington and myself. The animosity this lady had long borne me had not experienced any decrease. On the contrary, my late additional finery in my jewels, etc., had augmented it to something very near hatred. I had during the summer given Madam Montete, wife of the hair-dresser of the time, who was going to Paris, a commission to bring me from thence two tragedy

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* *Hitchcock*, v. ii. 223. For a fuller account of Woffington the editor may be allowed to refer to his "Life of Garrick," which, with the sketches found in Tate Wilkinson's Recollections given further on, furnish a picture of the famous Mrs. Woffington.

dresses, the most elegant she could purchase. I have already observed, that the proprietor allowed me a certain sum to find my own habiliments.

"My *chargée d'affaire* opened her credentials at Madam Bonfoy's, principal *marchand du mode* in that metropolis. I had requested this lady to consult Brilliant, who would consult Du Menil. She was likewise to take the joint opinion of all the people of taste there, upon an affair of such momentous consequence. The revival of 'Alexander' furnished me with an opportunity of showing all my elegance in the character of the Persian Princess.

"My royal robes in which I had represented the Empress Fulvia, in Doctor Francis's 'Constantine,' to the great loss of the public, had not been seen by them. They were showy and proper for the character. But in these *robes de cours*, taste and elegance were never so happily blended. Particularly in one of them, the ground of which was a deep yellow. Mr. Rich had purchased a suit of her Royal Highness's, the Princess Dowager of Wales, for Mrs. Woffington to appear in Roxana. It was not in the least soiled, and looked very beautiful by daylight; but, being a straw-color, it seemed to be a dirty white by candle-light; especially when my splendid yellow was by it. To this yellow dress I had added a purple robe; and a mixture so happy made it appear, if possible, to greater advantage.

"Thus accoutred in all my magnificence, I made my *entrée* into the green-room as the Persian Princess. But how shall I describe the feelings of my inveterate rival! The sight of my pompous attire created more real envy in the heart of the actress than it was possible the real Roxana could feel for the loss of the Macedonian hero. As soon as she saw me, almost bursting with rage, she drew herself up, and thus, with a haughty air, addressed me: 'I desire,

madam, you will never more, upon any account, wear those clothes in the piece we perform to-night.'

"You are too well acquainted with my disposition, and so, I dare say, are my readers by this time, to suppose this envious lady took the proper way to have her request granted. I replied, 'I know not, madam, by what right you take upon you to dictate to me what I shall wear. And I assure you, madam, you must ask it in a very different manner before you obtain my compliance.' She now found it necessary to solicit in a softer strain; and I readily gave my assent. The piece consequently went through without any more murmuring on her part, whatever might be her sensations.

"However, the next night I sported my other suit, which was much more splendid than the former. This re-kindled Mrs. Woffington's rage, so that it nearly bordered on madness. When—oh! dire to tell!—she drove me off the carpet, and gave me the *coup de grâce* almost behind the scenes. The audience, who I believe preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitude, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure at it.

"Though I despise revenge, I do not dislike retaliation. I therefore put on my yellow and purple once more. As soon as I appeared in the green-room, her fury could not be kept within bounds, notwithstanding one of the *corps diplomatique* was then paying homage to her beauty, and for the moment made her imagine she had the power of control equal to a real queen. She imperiously questioned me, how I dared to dress again in the manner she had so strictly prohibited? The only return I made to this insolent interrogation was by a smile of contempt. It was not long before I had my plenipo likewise, the never-failing Comte de Haslang, to whom I told the reason of my

changing my attire, which was meant *par oblique* to her. Upon hearing which, she immediately sent for Mr. Rich; but that gentleman prudently declined attending her summons.'

"Being now ready to burst with the contending passions which agitated her bosom, she told me it was well for me that I had a *minister* to supply my extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia. Struck with so unmerited and cruel a reproach, my asperity became more predominant than my good-nature, and I replied, I was sorry that even half the town could not furnish a supply equal to the minister she so illiberally hinted at. Finding I had got myself into a disagreeable predicament, and recollecting the well-known distich, that

> 'He who fights, and runs away,
> May live to fight another day;'

I made as quick an exit as possible, notwithstanding I wore the regalia of a queen. But I was obliged in some measure to the Comte for my safety, as his Excellency covered my retreat, and stopped my enraged rival's pursuit; I should otherwise have stood a chance of appearing in the next scene with black eyes, instead of the blue ones which nature had given me.

"The next season Mr. Foote profited by this behavior of Mrs. Woffington, and produced a little piece, which he entitled, 'The Green-room Squabble; or, a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius.' It may be supposed that after so public a rupture we never spoke. This taciturnity continued, till being upon her death-bed, some years after, she requested to see me. She then informed me, that she had once done me an intentional injury, by prevailing upon one of her lovers to show Mr. Fox a letter of mine which had accidentally

fallen into her hands, and the contents of which would admit of a different interpretation from what it was designed to convey. Her malicious intention had not, however, the desired effect, as that gentleman and myself were not upon the terms she suspected, or at least wished to have thought. I own I could not refrain from being much surprised at the wickedness and meanness of the intended injury. And though my humanity prompted me to forgive an offence which seemed to lie so heavy on her mind, I left the lady as soon as possible to reflect upon the illiberality of such a proceeding."

Of such fashion was her strange life—a mixture of pleasure, adventure, extravagance, and hardship. But her fickleness had alienated many friends and patrons, and her love of amusement, pleasure, and recklessness made her neglect the stage. Then humiliations of all kinds set in; she could hardly procure an engagement, and the once peerless heroine was contemptuously offered six pounds a week by Mr. Colman!

The first reminder of decay was her reception in Dublin.

## VII.

It was the season of 1760 when the exciting contest between Barry and Woodward on one side, and Mossop on the other, was raging, and the great world of fashion was divided into two parties, each supporting a rival house, just as in the great struggle of the Opera Houses in the days of Mr. Lumley. Mr. Mossop, whose own story is of a tragic cast, hoping to turn the balance by bringing over the once attractive Bellamy, agreed to pay her the sum of a thousand pounds, which was utterly disproportioned to the value of her service. "He relied on the old tradition of some thirteen years before, when," says Wilkinson, "she was esteemed a first actress, was

looked at as a charming elegant young woman, and was the universal toast in Ireland." She candidly owns that there was, at first, disappointment and surprise at the change in her appearance, but hints that this impression was removed on the following day by repose. She admits, too, that she "was by no means so well received as she had formerly been." But this she fancied was owing to her formerly having had no competitor.

"My arrival having been hourly expected, curiosity had induced many of the students of the College to watch for my coming. I accordingly found the door of the house, at which I was to alight, crowded with them, in expectation of beholding a wonder. For it could not enter into the imagination of those young gentlemen, that any less than a perfect beauty had been so general a topic of conversation, and the subject of so many poetical compliments from their predecessors.

"One of my female domestics was tolerably handsome; she, therefore, at first caught their eyes; but, as she had not the appearance of elegance which distinguishes the gentlewoman, the mistake was but momentary. At length I stepped out of the coach. The long expected phenomenon now made her appearance. But oh, how different a figure from what their imagination had depictured! Fashion to yourself the idea of a little dirty creature bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretensions to beauty. Such was I, when I presented myself to the sight of the gazing crowd. And so great and natural was their surprise and disappointment, that they immediately vanished, and left me to crawl into the house without admiration or molestation.

"I spent the evening at the Parliament House, where many of the seniors of the College, as well as the Provost,

were present. Others likewise came to see the fright which had excited the disgust of the curious in the morning. Nothing is so favorable to an object as exaggerated dispraise. For, with only the assistance of ablution, and in the most simple dress (simplicity in my dress being, as I have already observed, my constant adoption, except when finery was absolutely needful; and I always scorned to owe any addition to art, which I disliked as much in the adornment of the person as of the mind), I made a more favorable impression upon the company than could have been expected."

But there was an observant performer playing in Dublin, who gives a truer account of what took place. He sketches the poor decayed creature, with a not unkind bluntness, but the contrast to her complacent account is very striking. "Mossop, as manager," writes Tate Wilkinson, "made his first appearance in Pierre, in 'Venice Preserved,' Belvedera, Mrs. Bellamy, being the first night of her performing. Expectation was so great that the house filled, as fast as the people could thrust in with or without paying. On speaking her first line behind the scene,—

"Lead me, ye virgins, lead me to that kind voice,"

it struck the ears of the audience as uncouth and unmusical; yet she was received, as was prepared and determined by all who were her or Mr. Mossop's friends, and the public at large, with repeated plaudits on her entrée. But the roses were fled! the young, the once lovely Bellamy was turned haggard! and her eyes, that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, large, hollow, and ghastly. O Time! Time! thy glass should be often consulted! for before the first short scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance.

"By the end of the third act, they were all (like Bobadil) planet-struck; the other two acts hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played Pierre (one of his best parts) so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never after drew a single house there. She left Dublin without a single friend to regret her loss. What a change from the days of her youth! and as an actress of note, her name never more ranked in any theatre, nor did she ever again rise in public estimation."

Still the poor foolish lady launched out into fresh extravagance—though she had left a load of debt behind her in London. Here is a specimen of what she exposed herself to. "My bill," she says, "for wine and other articles, had of Mr. Crump, amounted to £400.

"Though I received fifty guineas a week, yet through the extravagance of my servants, and my own thoughtlessness, I had not a guinea beforehand. But, to my great surprise, I heard that Mr. Crump had failed: and Coates had taken possession of his effects, books, etc.

"'Coriolanus,' was bespoke; and Mr. Mossop had the agreeable prospect of a subscription for six plays, which would enable him to pay the performers; for not one of them was regularly paid but myself, though by what means he expended his money I could not imagine. As I went one day as usual to the rehearsal, I observed a mean-looking fellow run by the side of my chair. I called, in my way, upon a lady. Still the same man was my attendant. Having no suspicion of any danger from him, I attributed it to the beauty of my sedan; which, indeed, attracted every eye.

"I had some company at dinner, which made it rather later than usual when I set out for the theatre. As my chairmen entered Damask Street, the man who had followed me in the morning knocked at the front window of

my chair, and, when I had let it down showed me a bit of paper. Upon my inquiring what it was, he told me it was a writ for the two hundred pounds I owed Coates, as successor to Crump's affairs, and insisted that I should go with him. I told him he should have the money, if he would go to the theatre, and that I would likewise make him a handsome present for the permission. But this he would not consent to do; as, he said, he had particular orders from the plaintiff to the contrary.

"This being the case, I made a virtue of necessity, and went with him to a house in Skinner Row. When I got there, I sent for Coates, but he was not to be found. The officer now candidly told me, that the intention of taking me in the evening was to prevent my appearing at the theatre that night. He had been particularly warned, he said, not to arrest me in the morning, as they were well assured I should have paid the debt, and by that means have disappointed their purpose. It was two o'clock in the morning before the plaintiff could be met with, and as he had given orders that the affair should only be settled by himself, I was obliged to wait with patience his coming. Mrs. Molloy and Miss Ly'll visited me in my durance; and I believe the officer's house was never so graced before.

"Mrs. Usher had been obliged to read my part. As soon as the play was over, Mr. Mossop came to me. And I was vastly apprehensive that he would have caned Coates. This was what the man seemed to wish, for such a vulgar impertinent I never heard before. He had the impudence to tell us, that he knew he should easily have got the money, but he wished to prevent my playing that night. 'Everything,' continued he, 'is fair, where interests clash.'

"When Mr. Digges (a new lover) found me in this situation, he was like a distracted man. His first business

was to give a most severe chastisement to Coates; which, together with some other embarrassments in his private affairs, obliged him to leave Dublin."

Such was a type of the life that was now before her. With the decay of her charms, came fresh debt and embarrassment: arrests in the open street—with protection, then secured by "being made housekeeper to Count Haslang," whose suite as belonging to an ambassador enjoyed immunity from law process. Later came callousness,—the result of such struggles,—the usual shifts and battles with creditors, the pawning or sale of jewels and dresses—and, at last, final residence within the Rules.

"As soon as Mr. Fox, and some other guests, who had dined with me, were departed, I prepared to go to his Excellency's to cards; but, as I passed through Jermyn Street, I was overtaken by the wretch's brother, who, almost breathless with running after me, informed me that a man, who came up at the same time, had an action against me, at his sister's suit. The shock had such an effect upon me, that I dropped down speechless in the street. Two such insults, so quickly succeeding each other, were not to be supported. Had the latter come singly, I could have borne it with Roman fortitude; but, united, they were too severe a trial.

"Had I been able to preserve my reason upon this occasion, and been acquainted with the laws, I might have preserved my liberty, at least for that night; for it seems the fellows who arrested me had, in their great hurry, forgot the warrant; without which, I find, the caption is not valid; but, during my imbecility, one of them ran for it.

"I was taken, during this state of insensibility, to the officer's house in Stanhope Street, Clare Market; which happened to be the same where my brother, Captain O'Hara, was confined. It was so long before I came to

myself that the surgeon, who was sent for to bleed me, was apprehensive for my life.

"The mistress of the house had some feeling; and seeing me dressed above the common line, though plain, and having besides conceived some partiality for me, not only on account of my being an actress, but as sister to her favorite captain, who had so often been her lodger, she paid me more attention than persons generally meet with in such places. She sent for my maid, and kindly prevented all noise and confusion in the house for five days, during which I remained in a state of silent insanity. My maid, to return the obligations she thought I laid under to all those who sent to inquire after me, took the servants that brought the messages, which were not a few, to the bar, and treated them with what they would have; and this made no inconsiderable addition to my expenses.

"The sixth morning of my residence in this place, the woman of the house came up to me, and told me that the writ was returnable the next day, and if I did not eat and drink, and get a *habeas corpus*, I should be carried a corpse to Newgate. The name of that dreadful place made me tremble; but, at the same time, it roused me as if I had been electrified. I immediately recovered from my stupidity, and asked her what was to be done. She informed me that it would be necessary for me to employ an attorney to procure a *habeas* for me, and also to send and engage a lodging within the rules of the King's Bench. She added that her son, who was an attorney, was below, and would be glad to serve me. She concluded by telling me that persons in the law never advanced any money for their clients; though indeed they did not expect to have their bills settled immediately, especially where it was safe, as it must be with a lady who had credit enough to *owe* one person twelve hundred pounds. I startled at the mention

of so large a sum, and desired her to explain herself; which she did by telling me that was the debt for which the execution was levied against me.

"What was now to be done I scarcely knew. I had but a few guineas about me.

"I now began to consider whom I could send to upon this emergency. I had known Mrs. Stacie, when her husband kept an inn at Stilton. They had since removed to the Bedford Arms in Covent Garden. Having conceived a very strong attachment for her, from frequently calling at their house at Stilton, I had promised to stand sponsor to the child she was pregnant with, upon my return from the north. I had not only performed this promise, but had been called upon to appear upon the same occasion to two others.

"Upon the strength of this acquaintance, I immediately applied to her for twelve guineas. I thought that sum, with what I had, would be sufficient to pay the whole of my expenses here; but, to my inconceivable surprise, they amounted to as much again; so that I paid very handsomely for the civility the mistress of the house had shown me in keeping it quiet.

"Mrs. Stacie came immediately on my sending to her, and could not refrain from tears at seeing me in such an unexpected situation. Her husband had given her a bill for twenty pounds, which she let me have; and upon hearing that I had obstinately refused all food, when she returned, she sent me a supper of all the niceties their house afforded.

"In return for the civility the mistress of the house had shown me, I asked her to partake of the supper Mrs. Stacie sent me. She cheerfully accepted my invitation. During our meal, she enumerated all the persons of quality who had occasionally been her visitors. After supper, she asked if

she should entertain me with a song; for she was reckoned, she said, to have a very fine voice. The oddity of her manner, as she made the proposal, joined to her masculine figure, had such an effect upon my imagination, that I instantly burst into a violent fit of laughter. The approbation we expressed gave her such sensible pleasure, that she concluded with telling me she was sure, as I was fond of music, I *must* be pleased with her voice.

"The next morning Mr. Thomas, then Lord Mansfield's clerk, came himself with the tipstaff, to conduct me over to the warden. Mr. Marsden very politely met me at the door of his house, and conducted me into the parlor. My attorney having attended Mr. Woodward and Mr. Stacie there in the morning, to settle for the Rules, the Marshal knew of my coming, and I found everything usual for breakfast prepared against I arrived.

"This grand point being settled, I went to a little vile lodging, which had been taken for me, at the house belonging to the Windmill in St. George's Fields. For this wretched place I was to pay two guineas a week; but the time to procure me a lodging had been so short, that the first which offered was fixed upon.

"Mr. Marsden attended me himself, with great complaisance, to my new apartments; and I was not a little surprised, upon our being seated, at his taking out a large purse of gold, and presenting it to me, with a request that I would make use of it for my present exigencies, and return it to him when convenient.

"In the evening that gentleman came to pay me a visit; when he advised me to write, as soon as possible, to the Attorney-General, my much honored friend Mr. Yorke, to consult him upon my case. By Mr. Woodward not making me an offer of his assistance at this time, I was convinced that Miss Wordley's supposition was well founded. Indeed,

her sagacity and superior understanding enabled her to see every event clearer, in all points of view, than most people.

"The next day I desired her to take a letter to Mr. Yorke. My honorable (and now, alas! my much regretted) friend immediately wrote me an answer, wherein he informed me, in the kindest terms, that he would pay every attention to the affair, and would do all in his power to extricate me from it. But as nothing could be done till November, he requested me to accept the inclosed bills, in lieu of what his loved sister, Lady Anson, had intended to bequeath me, had she not been taken away suddenly. He then advised me, if my creditor could not be prevailed on to compromise the debt, to stand trial; when he was well assured, he said, a verdict would be given in my favor; but as his Excellency Comte Haslang was advanced in years, it might continue pending over my head for some time. In how pleasing a manner was this favor conferred! the delicacy and politeness with which it was accompanied gave it double value, and claimed my warmest acknowledgments.

"Finding I must make up my mind to my present situation, as nothing could be done for so long a time, I sent Miss Wordley to seek out another apartment; for though, by Mr. Yorke's bounty, I found myself possessed of two hundred pounds, yet it was visible that the noble donor had sent me that sum, on purpose to enable me to compromise the debt with Mrs. Ray, should she consent to it. Miss Wordley accordingly fixed on two rooms adjoining to the Dog and Duck, at twelve shillings a week; which were more eligible, better furnished, and much airier than those I was now in."

Two rooms adjoining the 'Dog and Duck'! To this condition was the beautiful Bellamy come at last. The rest of her life was of the same complexion; begging—

complaint—appeal to the public—squalor—destitution. A Benefit was arranged for her, and she appeared on the stage, an object more of curiosity than of interest.

"I dwell for a moment," says the pleasant Reynolds, "on a last appearance which I witnessed—namely, that of Mrs. Bellamy, who took her leave of the stage May 24th, 1785. On this occasion Miss Farren, the present Countess of Derby, spoke an address, which concluded with the following couplet:

> 'But see, oppress'd with gratitude and tears,
> To pay her duteous tribute she appears.'

The curtain then ascended, and Mrs. Bellamy being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favorable inclinations towards her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an arm-chair, from which she in vain attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words, expressive of her gratitude, and then sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her.

Some begging appeals to her old friend Tate Wilkinson, "the Wandering Patentee," whose adventures we shall next follow, speak significantly of the straits and misery in which her life was destined to close.*

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* It is interesting to know that so far back as the year 1822, these memoirs attracted the attention of M. Thiers, then a young writer in the *Constitutionnel*. To a collection, entitled "Memoires sur l'Art Dramatique," now a scarce book, he contributed a sort of abstract of "Mistress Bellamy's" story, in which he dwells on what he terms "the candor of a great soul, which, confident in the nobility of her intentions, revealed every questionable act of her life." Her memoirs, however, were believed to have been written to her dictation by one Bicknell.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ADVENTURES OF TATE WILKINSON.*

#### I.

"I, Tate Wilkinson, whose various stage adventures and *sparrings* have been permitted, and favored with acceptance, more or less, in almost every principal theatre in the three kingdoms, as Drury Lane, Covent Garden, Haymarket, Smock Alley and Crow Street, Dublin, Bath, Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Winchester, Maidstone, Birmingham, Chester, Bristol, Norwich, York, Shrewsbury, Richmond in Surrey, Exeter, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Lynn, Pontefract, Halifax, Doncaster, Hull, Wakefield, &c.—am the son of the late Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, who was educated at St. Bees in Cumberland and finished his studies at the university of Oxford, and who suffered transportation under the well-remembered Marriage Act in 1755. He was his Majesty's chaplain of the Savoy, also chaplain to his late Royal Highness Frederic Prince of Wales. I, Tate Wilkinson," (in this quaint fashion does the graphic but somewhat garrulous player commence his story), "was born October 27, 1739; and, by my father's sentence of transportation, was likely to have been irretrievably ruined. I was, at that critical period, at the age of seventeen—not brought up to any business or profession, of a very indifferent constitution, and neither mother nor son had the least independency.

"Previous to this unfortunate event, my father and

* Born 1739, died 1803.

mother had been connected with the most leading families, and were universally acquainted in London. Amongst our various visitors were Lord and Lady Forbes, from the sister kingdom. They were so attached to my father and mother, as to be almost inseparable. That intimacy subsisted on so strong a basis, and formed so firm a friendship that they used to call me their *own boy Tate*, and their *dear George's only particular friend.* They promised to fix me genteelly in life; and were certain if George lived to be Earl of Granard, Tate would be well provided for. Airy castles too often gain belief and dependence, when of a sudden they disappear, and wake the deluded dreamer from his transitory vision, and in lieu present a true mirror in which he views his actual state."

In the midst of a round of pleasant junketing, his father was brought to trial for his continued infringement of the marriage laws in the Savoy, and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.

"The time for his departure was early in March, 1757, and the last meeting between father, mother, and son was in that most dreadful of all places, Newgate! We who had for so many years moved in a different sphere, and who were more than commonly united—a description of it must here be omitted; but if the sensible, feeling mind will take a short pause, and honor the ashes of the dead with a moment's reflection and a tear of pity, it will be only paying a tribute due to humanity and mercy; and from whence ideas will flow in painting the result of such a tragical, affecting scene, as imagination will easily describe much stronger than any words can possibly express.

"My dear, benevolent, indulgent, gracious, and loving parent, farewell! May your last blessing procure me, at least, a small portion of your wishes for my short remains of life.

"When they reached the Downs, they could not proceed, the winds would not permit them; from thence we received a letter containing an account of my father being but very indifferent, as the gout had made a severe attack in his stomach; a complaint with which he was every year more or less afflicted in that dangerous seat of its residence. They were driven by stress of weather into Plymouth, where his enemy, *the gout*, assisted by the severity of the elements, seized this dreadful opportunity to league with Death and violently assaulted a mind and body already loaded with anguish, affection, and affliction, and by finding himself bereft of that assistance and tenderness from those he sighed for, but sighed in vain! the merciless invaders proved too mighty for his fortitude; the noble cordage cracked and broke! Grim Death sat triumphant over his conquered manes!

"Before the end of this tragical story, I must relate that the captain of the vessel had my father privately interred at Plymouth, from whence, as fatality seemed to pervade the whole mysterious event, on the captain's returning to his ship, his boat was overset by a rough sea, the crew were saved, but the captain perished."

The little boy had found his way to the theatre, and was encouraged to "take off" the peculiarities of Mrs. Woffington, Quin, and other performers, which he did also to the delight of friends of the family. When he was left almost destitute after the death of his father, he still hung about the side scenes, evidently one of those forward, pert young fellows who extort a laugh, but about whom no good is prophesied.

"My mother's friends were capable and willing to afford every support to enable her to keep up a decent appearance, both at home and abroad, by a respectable assistance; which, when so bestowed, will ever gladden the oppressed

mind; but not when offered as a supercilious gift—as who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle!'—'How good I am!'

"The stage my thoughts had not forgot, though I dared not avow my inclination for it, fearing my patrons and mother would not prefer my being a player to that of an officer. However, unknown to them, I plucked up courage, and waited on Mr. Rich (the manager of Covent Garden Theatre), and after rehearsing several speeches from Richard III. he behaved very familiarly, and desired me to hear HIM act Richard III., and, his acting over, I was without loss of time enrolled on the list of his pupils: but after the honor of attending his levées, having free admission behind the scenes, and receiving a few lessons from him, he, to my astonishment, declared I was incapable of becoming an actor.

"I lived on hopes, however, that Mr. Rich would ere long perceive my genius, which I assured myself was beyond compare; and soon after, on my repeating the first speech of Richard III. one morning in the exact tone and manner of old Rich, he seemed delighted, and I judged all would soon terminate in the accomplishment of my wishes; but the following odd accident frustrated all my hopes, and I innocently incurred the fixed displeasure of Mr. Rich. This total overthrow to all my expectations was occasioned by Mrs. Woffington. The cause was as follows:—One day my old friend Captain Forbes had invited me to dine with him at the Bedford Arms, and after a choice dinner, with plenty of good wine, &c., the Captain said, 'Tate, we will go to the play,' and added that he wished to go behind the scenes: but as I went there only on sufferance, I told him it was not in my power to oblige him. 'If so,' said my friend George, 'we will not separate; for I will treat you to the boxes.' Being jolly with the bottle, I assented, and when arrived at the theatre, I could not prevail on

him to sit anywhere but in the stage box. He was in full guard regimentals—myself by no means dressed fit to appear as his companion; but as he persisted and led the way, I followed, and in front of his Majesty's stage box we were seated; and no more strange than true, the lower sides exhibited a beggarly account of empty boxes.

"Being in such a conspicuous situation, the eyes of the performers from behind the scenes were instantaneously attracted on beholding a poor young lad—a mere dependent (skulking nightly behind the curtain)—placed in a stage box—they were, therefore, astonished at my audacity in usurping and possessing such a particular seat of distinction—and a creature, too, that was destitute, and soliciting for bread, they naturally concluded I had gained admittance by an order, and taken such a place by way of ignorant and impudent bravado, the which deserved chastisement. They sent and spoke to Mr. Rich, and it was agreed that Wilkinson should be instantly ordered from his improper situation. A messenger was sent to put this mandate from Mr. Rich in full force. The box-keeper came to me; and Captain Forbes warm with his wine, and the insult offered to his friend, soon convinced the official messenger of his mistake, and the box-keeper was sent back to assure Mr. Rich that Mr. Wilkinson was seated there by proper authority; as Captain Forbes, who was well known by being a constant box attendant at their theatre, had paid ten shillings for admittance. This, I was well informed, caused a general green-room laugh of contempt at the expense of the poor poverty-struck gentleman in the stage box: but unfortunately Mrs. Woffington, who acted Clarissa, having been frequently told that I was remarkable for *taking her off* (as the phrase was, and is), came close to the stage box, finishing her speech with such a sarcastic sneer at me as actually made me draw back.

My unfortunate star sure was then predominant, for at that moment a woman of the town, in the balcony above where I was seated, repeated some words in a remarkably shrill tone, which occasioned a general laugh; like electricity it caught Mrs. Woffington's ear, whose voice was far from being enchanting; on perceiving the pipe-squeak on her right hand, and being conscious of the insult she had then given apparently to me, it struck her comprehension so forcibly that she immediately concluded I had given the retort upon her in that open and audacious manner, to render her acting and tone ridiculous to the audience, as returning contempt for her devilish sneer. She again turned and darted her lovely eyes, though assisted by the furies, which made me look confounded and sheepish; all which only served to confirm my condemnation. When the scene was finished, and she had reached the green-room, she related my insolence in such terms as rendered me a subject of abuse, contempt, and hatred with all the company; but of that circumstance I was quite ignorant: —at the instant I had, it is true, observed, to my mortification, Mrs. Woffington looked angry, but could not divine the real cause.

"The noon following, when I attended Mr. Rich's levée, I was kept in waiting a considerable time; but as that was, and is, the too common fate of distressed dependence, patience was my friend and companion. At last Mrs. Woffington passed through the room where I was thus humiliated, and without a word, courtesy, or bow of her head, proceeded on to her sedan, from which she as haughtily returned, and advancing towards me with queen-like steps, and viewing me most contemptuously, said—'Mr. Wilkinson, I have made a visit this morning to Mr. Rich, to command and to insist on his not giving you any engagement whatever—no, not of the most menial kind—

in the theatre. Merit you have none—charity you deserve not,—for if you did my purse should give you a dinner. Your impudence to me last night, where you had with such assurance placed yourself, is one proof of your ignorance; added to that I heard you echo my voice when I was acting, and I sincerely hope in whatever barn you are suffered as an unworthy stroller, that you will fully experience the same contempt you dared last night to offer me.' With a flounce and enraged features, without waiting or permitting me to reply, she darted once more into her chair. I really was so astonished, frightened, and bewildered, that I knew not how to act or think, but was relieved from longer suspense and tedious waiting by a message from Rich, intimating that he could not see me at his levée, either that day or in future, or listen to any engagement whatever; for my behavior was too gross and rude to be justified, and I must immediately depart; but the person added, I might continue the liberty of the scenes during the season, with this proviso, that I should not on any account take the freedom to speak to Mr. Rich. I wished not, nor had the power, to make an answer.

"Provisions were short at home—my good mother's poverty increased. One good advantage this distress produced was, that what I should have devoured *that* day, with my noddle full of vanity, was reserved for the *next*—my stomach being quite satisfied with grief, shame, and vexation; poverty pursuing my steps. My mother of course execrated Rich and Woffington; wept over her darling boy, and flew to that Refuge, which she often declared always afforded her support, and had never forsaken her, even when sinking under the greatest affliction; and that Refuge was a constant address to the Deity, and a trust in His Divine mercy. However, I would not give up the play that night, nor in a pet resign my permission of being

behind the scenes; but the theatre was no longer that earthly paradise I had formed, for the mist was removed, and I saw actors, actresses, and myself in a different mirror which convinced me what we all really were.

"When I went into the green-room, an universal laugh of contempt ensued. Woffington, the queen bee of the hive, was there; I had disturbed and offended her Majesty; and therefore all her faithful servants, bee-like, joined to sting me, except Mr. Shuter, who saw my distress and good-naturedly took me by the hand, led me to his dressing-room and desired me not to be cast down; but observed I must not enter the green-room again, as they were one and all determined on my banishment. In such a situation, it will naturally be conceived I had a claim to pity and some little protection, and that players must of course be the most cruel of all people.

"Mrs. Woffington ever had a train of admirers; she possessed wit, vivacity, &c., but never permitted her love of pleasure and conviviality to occasion the least defect in her duty to the public as a performer. Six nights in the week has been often her appointed lot for playing without murmuring; she was ever ready at the call of the audience, and though in the possession of all the first line of characters, yet she never thought it improper, or a degradation of her consequence, to constantly play the Queen in Hamlet, Lady Ann in Richard III., and Lady Percy in Henry IV.; parts which are mentioned as insults in the country, if offered to a lady of consequence.

"Read this, ye heroes and heroines! She also cheerfully acted Hermione, or Andromache; Lady Pliant, or Lady Touchwood; Lady Sadlife, or Lady Dainty; Angelica, or Mrs. Frail; and several others alternately, as best suited the interest of her manager.

"One evening, some few weeks after my late mentioned

disgrace, Mrs. Woffington was acting Lady Dainty; I ventured, after much hesitation, to say to Mrs. Barrington, I thought Mrs. Woffington looked beautiful—Mrs. Barrington tossed up her head and said, that was no news, as she looked so every night; at which she and Mrs. Vincent laughed: this occasioned Mrs. Woffington to turn her head, and condescendingly ask, what they were smiling at. Mrs. Barrington replied that the young man was saying that Lady Dainty looked beautiful that night, and added, she had told him there needed not that information, as she always looked so. Mrs. Woffington, viewing me disdainfully, cried, 'Poor creature!' 'O God!' says I, 'what shall I do for bread! I had better exhibit in a barn, but am not sure if I can even get that situation.' My only comfort was my acquaintance with the facetious Ned Shuter; it grew soon to a strong friendship, for he took me to all his parties, and that made my time glide more pleasantly.

"Unfit for the stage, what could I do? My mother's existence was procured by the sale or pawning every trifle that could raise a few shillings; and she, trembling to view the darkened prospect when the last resources were expended, compelled me to wait on Mr. Rich once more, and solicit him to retain me on any trifling salary for the ensuing year; but I received a short and peremptory 'NO! You are unfit for the stage, Muster Whittington, and I won't larn you—you may go, Muster Whittington;' and he stroked his favorite cat.

"Summer did not promise me better than the winter had done; for with my bad reception I could not get a recommendation or probability of any engagement whatever even in the country. Monday, May 17, 1757, 'As You Like It' was acted at Covent Garden, for the benefit of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Wignel, and a Mad. Gondou. I

was standing near the wing as Mrs. Woffington in Rosalind, and Mrs. Vincent in Celia, were going on the stage in the first act. Mrs. Woffington ironically said she was glad to have that opportunity of congratulating me on my stage success; and did not doubt but such merit would insure me an engagement the following winter. I bowed, but made her no answer—I knew her dislike to me, and was humiliated sufficiently, and needed not any slight to sink me lower. For then, and not till then, adversity had taught me to know myself. She went through Rosalind for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered, but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted; I thought she looked softened in her behavior, and had less of the *hauteur*. When she came off at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill; but got accoutred and returned to finish the part, and pronounced in the epilogue speech, "If it be true that good wine needs no bush—it is as true that a good play needs no epilogue,' &c., &c. But when arrived at 'If I were among you I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me,' her voice broke, she faltered, endeavored to go on, but could not proceed—then in a voice of tremor screamed, 'O God! O God!' tottered to the stage door speechless, where she was caught. The audience of course applauded till she was out of sight, and then sank into awful looks of astonishment, both young and old, before and behind the curtain, to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favorite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about forty-four. She was given over that night, and for several days; but so far recovered as to linger till near the year

1760, but existed as a mere skeleton; *sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* everything. Vain is Beauty's gaudy flower!"

II.

"A Mrs. Wardale, anxious for my situation and welfare, had prevailed on the Honorable Miss Foley, sister to Lord Foley, to ask the favor of a letter of recommendation from her intimate friend, Lord Mansfield, to Mr. Garrick; which his Lordship immediately complied with: so with those credentials I was to proceed on a visit the next day, and which I assure the reader seemed to require more than common fortitude. I marched up and down Southampton Street three or four times before I dared rap at this great man's door, as fearing instant admission might follow; or, what appeared to me almost as dreadful, if graciously admitted, how I should be able to walk, move, or speak before him. However, the rap was at last given, and the deed was done past all retreating. 'Is Mr. Garrick at home?' 'Yes.' Then delivering the letter from Miss Foley, with an inclosed one from Lord Mansfield, and after waiting in a parlor for about ten minutes, I was ordered to approach. Mr. Garrick glanced his scrutinizing eye first at me, then at the letter, and so alternately; at last—'Well, sir—Hey!—What, now you are a stage candidate? Well, sir, let me have a taste of your quality.' I, distilled almost to jelly with my fear, attempted a speech from Richard, and another from Essex; which he encouraged by observing, I was so much frightened, that he could not form any judgment of my abilities; but assured me, it was not a bad omen, as fear was by no means a sign of want of merit, but often the contrary. We then chatted for a few minutes, and I felt myself more easy, and requested leave to repeat a few speeches in imitation of the then principal stage representatives. 'Nay—now,' says Garrick, 'sir, you must take

care of this, for I used to call myself the first at this business.' I luckily began with an imitation of Foote. It is difficult here to determine whether Garrick hated or feared Foote the most; sometimes one, sometimes the other was predominant; but from the attention of a few minutes, his looks brightened—the glow of his countenance transfused to mine, and he eagerly desired a repetition of the same speech. I was animated, forgot Garrick was present, and spoke at perfect ease. 'Hey, now! Now—what—all,' says Garrick—'How—really this—this—is—(with his usual hesitation and repetition of words)—Why—well—well—Do call on me again on Monday at eleven, and you may depend upon every assistance in my power. I will see my brother manager, Mr. Lacey, to-day, and let you know the result.'

"I now really thought Fortune had done with tormenting me. Honored not only with the approbation, but friendship, of that great man, I was elated into a degree of rapture I had not experienced for a long time; and in truth I fancied that, should the infallible Pope Garrick quit the stage, either by death, choice, or accident, I should in a few seasons be able to supply the vacant chair: so light is vanity! I did not walk, but flew to my lodgings, where my poor anxious mother sat trembling for the event. The noise I made in running up the stairs, and my countenance on entering the room, denoted in full evidence that she was to receive good—not bad news. On my relating to her Mr. Garrick's kind behavior, and his assurance of serving me, she concluded her son Tate's fortune was made: she blessed Garrick! she blessed me! and we were both for that day perfectly happy.

"Mine and my mother's dinner that day (the 25th of May, 1757) was most luxuriant; and I can affirm that neither his Majesty nor any of his subjects dined with better appetite or greater happiness.

"On the Monday, I negligently slid up Southampton Street, not with the tottering attendant fear of the preceding week. I was spruced out, knocked at the door with a degree of assurance, was instantly admitted, and not only found Mr. Garrick alone, but as soon as he saw me, he expressed a wish of impatience for my promised visit; said he had heard a most favorable account of my mother, of whom he had made an inquiry, and should be glad for the sake of so deserving a woman to assist me to the utmost of his power. This was a cordial to my heart; and I believe it may be made a certain observation, that whenever young or old wait on a superior as a dependent character he or she is anxiously tremulous until satisfied whether the grant can be obtained or not. But now all appeared to me in a happy train. Mr. Garrick said, 'Young gentleman, I have seen Mr. Lacey, and we are determined to put you on the books at thirty shillings per week the ensuing season. I will think of some line of characters for you to perform on the stage. My time is short, and not at my disposal this morning, as I must be at Hampton to dinner; therefore, as I am on the wing, do oblige me with a repetition of what you recited last Saturday.' I readily complied, and executed it with spirit. From the imitation of Foote I proceeded with great alacrity to several others; and when I came to those of Mr. Barry and Mrs. Woffington, as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, I was obliged to stop, he seemed so truly entertained. I thought it very comical, and that the joke might not be lost I laughed too; but on the merriment ceasing, I perceived a concealed third laughter—the Lady Teazle behind the screen, which greatly puzzled me; when on a sudden a green cloth double door flew open, which I found led to a little breakfast parlor, and discovered a most elegant lady—no less a personage than Mrs. Garrick, who had, it seems, been pur-

posely posted there for her secret opinion of my imitations of Foote; as Mr. Garrick always affected to pay great compliment to her judgment and opinion, and I really believe not all acted complaisance, but founded on real esteem. But like his brethren mortals, he had his frailties.

"Mrs. Garrick apologized for her rudeness and intrusion —confessed she had taken possession of that snug spot unobserved, at the desire of Mr. Garrick, as from his account of my imitations on the Saturday, she expected to be much gratified; but when she heard the tones of Mrs. Woffington, the ridicule was so strongly pointed that it was not in her power to restrain from laughter, by the pleasure and great satisfaction she had received. If it had happened otherwise, Mrs. Mouse would not have appeared, but kept snug in her hole. Perhaps female prejudice here might operate in my favor, as Mr. Garrick had previous to his marriage with Madam Violette, paid his devoirs to Mrs. Woffington.

"Before I took my leave, I acquainted our Roscius with my intention relative to Maidstone, which he approved, and said practice would acquire me freedom and ease on the stage—it was what he had done previous to his public appearance in London; but the chief lesson he would give to a young man trying his fortune on the stage was *sobriety*. I made my bow and departed, not doubting but when the autumn approached, I should read my name in the newspapers, and (as the Apprentice says) stuck in large capitals,

'The part of OTHELLO, by a Young Gentleman.'"

The young fellow was a free and mischievous creature who had been spoiled by the flatteries and laughter of friends. He was now as much elated as he had been depressed; and probably had been cleverly taking off his new patron, or giving some grotesque description of the inter-

view; for, on the season opening, he was somewhat taken down by the following summary treatment.

"Early in September 1757, Drury Lane opened, and I attended, as being then enrolled on the royal list of his Majesty's company of comedians. On the rehearsal of 'Romeo and Juliet,' I was summoned on the stage by Cross the prompter, who said he had orders from Mr. Garrick that I should wait as a Torch Bearer in the last act, and also as a Waiting Gentleman in every play. On which Mr. Garrick advanced, and, before the company, said aloud, 'This, sir, is my command—and if not complied with I shall take your coat off and do the business myself; and you, sir, will immediately be dismissed my theatre.' There certainly was a severity in this; for though I stood astonished, grieved, and petrified at this sudden appointment, I had not refused; and therefore the pointed manner in which he spoke, was tyranny, in a degree I never then had seen exercised without provocation."

III.

"The theatre being for the first month opened three nights in a week, my salary was only fifteen shillings as pay-house play, and when got to four nights, merely twenty shillings; but that pittance was too material an object for me to think of relinquishing. I waited (as it is termed) in the 'Mourning Bride'—the funeral procession in 'Romeo and Juliet'—'Macbeth,' and twice rode a hobby horse in the field of battle, when Garrick acted Bayes. The last week of Mr. Foote's playing in Drury-Lane, previous to his intended trip to Ireland, he was accidentally with Garrick. The conversation, as I was informed, by chance turned on imitation. Garrick said, "Egad, Foote! there is a young fellow engaged with me, who I really think is superior to either of us at mimicry. I used to think myself

well at it, but I actually give him the preference: he has tried to resemble me, but that will not do; though Mrs. Garrick says she is sure he will be like me.' 'D—n it!' says Foote, 'I should like to hear him.' Holland, with Garrick's approbation, came immediately to inquire for me. I was soon found in the green-room, and escorted to the manager's cabinet, assuring me that Mr. Garrick wanted to see me on particular business. My heart panted with fear, doubt, and hope, on this unexpected summons. After an awkward entrance, and a silence of a few minutes, my suspense was eased by Mr. Garrick very good-naturedly saying, that he had spoken well of me to Mr. Foote, and desired I would satisfy that gentleman with a taste of my quality such as first struck my fancy; adding, that he expected I would do my best in order to convince his *good* friend, Mr. Foote, that his assertions of my merit were not exaggerated. I complied, and (as the phrase is) *took off* several performers—Barry, Sparks, Woffington, Ridout, Sheridan, &c.—received high encomiums and thanks—made my bow and retired from the august assembly.

"The next day my friend, Mr. Owenson, who was intimate with Foote, waited on me with that gentleman's compliments, intimating, that he was going to Dublin for a few weeks in five or six days' time. He had observed Mr. Garrick thought me only fit for his Hobby Horse in the 'Rehearsal,' and if I wished to be released from such tyranny, he would be glad of my company to Ireland at his own expense, and he would fix me on genteel terms with Mr. Sheridan; that I should appear in Othello, and he would act Iago. This was a cheering cordial elixir to my drooping spirits and to my still more drooping pocket. On the evening I met my Master—Garrick—at the theatre, who confirmed the above treaty, and said he was glad of an opportunity to serve me, and hoped it would turn out

advantageous. My equipment was poorly provided; my old black was my only suit, a small pair of bags easily contained my wardrobe. My mother dreaded this long voyage, and being used to vexation and crosses, experience made her give me but little hopes from Irish hospitality, or the appearance of a shabby, distressed lad soliciting favors.

"From lodging, livelihood, and support, all that my mother could spare to give me to supply my empty purse with was six shillings; but luckily Mrs. Wardale, the lady of Carlisle before mentioned, hearing of my journey, and knowing mine and my mother's inability, presented me with two guineas. I took leave of my affectionate parent, met Mr. Foote at the Bedford Arms, and in one hour after set off with him in a post-chaise, and his servant on horseback. We only traveled that night to his little cottage at Elstree, in Hertfordshire. Two days after that, we dined at Kitty Keney's at West Chester, and the following day went with Capt. Bonfoy, who was then commander of the Royal Yacht, for Park Gate, as the Captain said he would sail that afternoon. Here we were detained with several persons of fashion, who had been impatiently attending on the caprice of the wind. Mr. Hill, an elderly gentleman, Lord Macartney, Mr. Leeson, now Lord Milltown, and several others; we all went on board, but all returned, as the wind continued obstinate. We all messed together; for Foote's company, as he was well acquainted with each, was the only treat that truly dreary place Park Gate could afford. Our patience being exhausted, it was unanimously agreed that we should proceed to Holyhead; horses were hired. This was early in November, and was not pleasing to me, who had never ridden twenty miles on horseback in my life; however there was no alternative, as I was become a dependent traveler, and must submit to follow. I thought we were all to have set off together; they went at seven

o'clock in the morning, requesting Foote's company at each house they stopped at; but Foote and myself remained behind, and on my asking him the reason of his delay, he answered, that it was a rule of his, and worth my observation, that whenever he met with persons of distinction and fortune on the road traveling to small inns (as was, and is the case on the Welsh roads), he made it a rule always to be half a day behind or before them; as, with all their politeness, they expected the best accommodations; or if they were so kind as to offer you a preference, you could not in policy or good manners accept such an offer; therefore you never could on such a journey be well suited or attended, unless by being the stage, at least, before or after them; and if going to another inn, the landlady of the neglected house would pique herself on her behavior, to convince her guests they had paid the compliment of preference not to her only, but for their own comfort and advantage.

"Holyhead in Wales is eighty-seven miles from West Chester; there we were detained again some days, and strange but true, the high living with the persons at that place, and a severe cold, had kept me ill in bed most part of that day; the wind changed, but it changed to a violent storm, and at nine at night, all dark and dismal, did we roll in the boat belonging to the packet, over waves most dreary to behold; for the whiteness of the breakers shone double from the darkness of the night. When handed into the packet, I asked for a bed; but they were all secured, not even one for Mr. Foote, as plenty of cash from the great people had made that request impossible to be complied with. The cabin was wedged like the black-hole at Calcutta. The tumultuous moving of the ship soon made my inquiries after a bed of down quite needless, for I sank on the boards, where my poverty bags were my only pillow,

and there I lay tossed in the most convulsive sickness that can be imagined. I have seen many suffer by this sea malady, but never, I verily think, such an object of commiseration as myself. The storm increased, but the wind was fair for Ireland; as to death, I was so truly sick, that I was very indifferent whether I sank or swam. Mr. Foote was tolerably well, and walking most of the night from place to place.

"Thank God, we arrived safe in Dublin Bay about twelve o'clock, and by one were taken in a Dunleary hoy to Dublin Quay; a coach conveyed us to a tavern in College Green, where we were regaled. I say we, though I continued very sick and much out of order. In about an hour Mr. Foote went to the lodgings provided for him, and left me to take care of myself. I inquired for a hotel, and was directed to one on Essex Quay, to which place I took coach; where, overpowered with illness, sickness, and fatigue, I went to bed and lay till Monday noon, but in a comfortless state. I rang the bell for breakfast, but it did not afford relief; and about four o'clock in the afternoon, crawled to the house I remembered to have left the day before in College Green, where I had soup, chicken, and wine, and after sitting full two hours fancied myself better, owing to the momentary spirits the wine had given me. Paying for my repast, I inquired of the waiter where Mrs. Chaigneau lived; he replied just over the way. This was agreeable intelligence, as indeed that was the family, the reader I hope will kindly recollect, I so particularly mentioned in the first part of my history. Then my fluttering heart hoped welcome to the poor, the orphan, and the stranger; next the apprehension of a rebuff occurred, but distress of situation pushed me on, and to the house, as directed, I went. When I had advanced with trembling and tottering steps to the corner palace, and inquiring if Mrs. Chaigneau was at home, I was

answered with an affirmative. I desired the servant to acquaint his mistress that a person from England requested to speak with her, and after waiting a few minutes (which my impatience doubled) a thin-looking lady entered the room, but I could not recollect a feature, or any likeness to resemble the form I expected to behold; but supposed time or illness might have made heavy inroads on the brittle frame. With the utmost agitation I presumed to inquire if her name was Chaigneau. The lady answered, 'Yes.' I then ventured to pronounce, 'Madam, I flatter myself you recollect me when you were in England; my name is Wilkinson, son of the late Doctor Wilkinson of the Savoy.' She answered, 'Indeed, sir, you are mistaken.' This was a thunder-stroke, as my fears intrepreted it a willful disclaiming of her knowledge of me; but I was after a pause relieved by her looking serious and repeating to herself—'Wilkinson! Wilkinson!'—and suddenly saying 'O, young gentleman! I beg your pardon; I believe I can now clear up this mistake, in which we both are at present involved. —I have often heard your father and mother mentioned in terms of the highest regard by my brother and sister Chaigneau. You, as a stranger, have made a mistake as to the house. I am married to Mr. John Chaigneau, brother to Mr. William Chaigneau, and to whose house you have been wrongly directed. They live in Abbey Street. I not knowing the way, she requested her servant might call a coach for me, which was instantly done (as there was then, and always is a stand of coaches in College Green). I was driven to Abbey Street, and on my road over Essex Bridge was vastly pleased at seeing the number of lamps, sedan chairs, carriages, hackney coaches, footmen with flambeaux, &c., as it appeared to resemble another London. When arrived at Abbey Street, and the awful rap was given, I was not only, from frequent misfortunes and disappointments,

all flutter, but found myself not well; yet I gave myself the comfort to attribute it to fancied illness, proceeding from anxiety, distress, and unaccustomed fatigue; and therefore hoped it would go off. The first answer to my inquiry at Mr. William Chaigneau's door from the servant was, that he could not tell whether either his master or mistress were at home or not, but would go and see; he soon returned with an answer more potent than the first—that they were both at home, and what was more fortunate, they were without company. I had no sooner entered the room where they were sitting, than—than what?—why, to proceed requires the *best* of novel pens to present, fulfill, and do service to the scene that followed. This generous Mr. William Chaigneau and wife were on the list of the few instances where

> 'Mutual temper with unclouded ray,
> Could make to-morrow welcome as to-day.'

"Their pleasures were the same—their affections were the same. Their instantaneous recollection of me—the great intimacy between the families—my father's death and calamities being so lately public, and now refreshed to their memory, revived the idea of their own distress from the loss of their darling child, the infant-marriage between me and that daughter, my present assured, unfortunate, helpless situation, with a look of desponding hope dependent on their feelings, all collected rushed on their alternate sudden thoughts with such quick transitions, as made them all combined too mighty for Mrs. Chaigneau's tender spirits; indeed so powerfully, that the fictitious distress of Lady Randolph on the stage was by no means equal to her poignant sense of my misery and situation; and it was actually some time before she could recover herself with any degree of composure to inquire what had brought me there,

or what could be done to serve me. Mr. Chaigneau was also greatly agitated; but not to so extravagant a degree as my good benefactress, as she afterwards proved to the utmost extent. After a little composure, and my full relation of what had happened to my mother and myself since the fatal marriage act passed, a comfortable supper was set on the table. After which pleasing ceremony, they assured me that every exertion in their power and all their friends and connections, I might as much depend upon as if the welfare of their own son was the person whose interest they were to plead for.

"During a short interval I felt elated beyond myself, the transition was so wonderful: but, alas! how fleeting are human joys as to pain, hope, or sorrow! For soon after this pleasing unforeseen sensation of rapture, I suddenly sank into an heavy feverish languor, not in my power to uphold. Mrs. Chaigneau exclaimed, 'My God! Tate is ill!' Her words were prophetic; I wished and tried to shake it off, but all in vain;—disorder and delirium grew too powerful, my head felt dreadfully deranged. My real friends, in every sense of the word, were alarmed; Mrs. Chaigneau declared she could not permit me by any means to return to the hotel in such a state of apparent illness as I then seemed to labor under. They sent to the next door, engaged a comfortable lodging for me, and provided me with hock-wine, whey, and such accommodation as they thought immediately necessary. The ensuing day, instead of finding myself relieved, I was seized most dangerously by an outrageous miliary fever.

"In that outrageous fever did I continue, and in a truly lamentable state, with a complication of distraction and agony, for near three weeks; blisters on my ankles, and every physical torture to increase my miseries. Mr. Chaigneau often used to joke and say, what an expensive guest I

was to him for his old hock; the quantity I drank in whey, by his account, was incredible. However Providence, aiding my youth, brought me once more into the world; and here I must not omit my sincere and grateful acknowledgments to God. For, good reader, will you believe it, that all this time of my severe suffering, notwithstanding Mr. Foote must have heard I had left the hotel and tavern with evident marks of indisposition, he never once (to the disgrace of Christianity be it asserted!) made inquiry whether I was living or dead; or if living, whether I had decent necessaries.

"Before I was able to go abroad, or even to leave my apartments, I sent my compliments to Mr. Foote, to acquaint him where I was; for Mr. and Mrs. Chaigneau were so offended at such brutality of behavior towards me, that neither of them had given him any intelligence concerning me. Mr. Foote on my information, waited on Mr. Chaigneau, and by way of apology, said he could not see me for three or four days for fear of catching the infection from the fever—professed himself anxious to supply my wants, which he was informed was at that time quite unnecessary. After that he waited on me as my most *anxious* friend, and in about three weeks I recovered so fast, by the help of my good nurses, that I dined every day with my preserving angels at the next door; was attended every noon with jellies, &c.; and what was more extraordinary, had my chariot every morning at the door to take my daily airing. O gemini! a coach!

"As soon as I was able to be taken by my patrons a visiting, an elegant suit of clothes was provided for me, that I might be a credit, and *not* by my thread-bare appearance disgrace either my friends or myself. Mr. and Mrs. Chaigneau introduced me to all their acquaintance; nor could they be pleased more, than by any act of kindness

that was bestowed on me. Their connections were particularly numerous, Mr. William Chaigneau being principal agent to most of the regiments on the Irish establishment, and was consequently universally known, and likewise respected.

"All the families in Ireland with whom my father and mother had formerly been intimate in London, proved by innumerable acts of generosity and true zeal for my welfare, that friendship is sometimes more than a name. On my visiting abroad, I was soon invited to Lord Forbes's in Stephen's Green, also to the Kellys', Alderman and Mrs. Forbes's, Acheson's, Collage's, John Chaigneau's, Coates's, Hamilton's, &c., and received particular favor from those persons, as well as from Lord Clanbrassil, Lord Bellamont, Lord Milltown, Mr. Hill, Miss Knoxes, &c. &c. At each of the above families', in the full meaning of the word, I had a home, and I never received a cool look unless for staying away, though a favor may be bestowed with an ill grace; and I will beg leave here to give an instance. Lord Forbes I had been used to see frequently in London, even from the time of my wearing frocks; and I am certain his invitations in Dublin were intended most friendly, and his will was ever to serve me; but one day on dining with his Lordship, when several persons of quality were invited—the bottle, our sun of the table—after dinner moved quickly round, and as the wine circulated, not feeling any restraint, and his Lordship not being a stranger to me, I very heartily smacked my lips, and said, 'O my lord, this is excellent wine!' On which he paused, and looking full at me (by which means he drew the attention of the whole company), said, with a satirical smile, 'Pray, Tate, what or who has made you a judge of wine? Never give your judgment in company as to wine; for in a young man like you it is not becoming or proper.' This effectu-

ally silenced me; nay, it did worse than that, for it made me feel my inferiority, and I was abashed and unhappy till released that evening from the company of the great, and which two hours before had greatly elated me. . . .

"Near Christmas I began to think of making my appearance on the stage. . . .

"It was appointed for me to appear the Monday following in Mr. Foote's 'Tea,' in the character of a pupil under Mr. Puzzle, the supposed director of a rehearsal. Mr. Puzzle, by Mr. Foote. He sent me a part called Bounce, but which I begged, as the time was so short, to decline; and, as I did not attend any rehearsal, it was agreed that I should appear as Mr. Wilkinson (his pupil) when called upon, and repeat just what I could select to please myself—not any regular character.

"When the night came, Lord Forbes, Mr. Chaigneau, and all my friends, went to encourage and support me, and engaged all they knew for the same purpose. One lucky circumstance was my not being known as a performer, therefore I had their wishes and pity in a high degree—but great fear of my not being able to succeed. The story of my distressed situation—the blazoned Marriage Act—my being a young gentleman—my illness, &c. &c., were become topics of public conversation. As to intelligence, requested by critics from the players relative to myself, they neither did nor could pronounce, with knowledge, either good or ill. *But I will rather suppose five out of six spoke to my disadvantage*,* from the too general depravity of human nature; as persons listen to satire rather than praise: it is more descriptive, displays the tripping tongue, and

* This cynical remark will be noted as showing knowledge of human character. Indeed all his observations on the players' nature are well worthy of study.

suits conversation much better; it gives energy to the informant, and quick ears to the languid. The bill ran thus:

'After the PLAY
Mr. FOOTE will give TEA.
Mr. PUZZLE (the Instructor) Mr. FOOTE.
First PUPIL, by a YOUNG GENTLEMAN
(*Who never appeared on any Stage before*).'

By eight in the evening I was in full dress behind the scenes; I had never been there before; the company were all strangers to me. Not knowing how to enter into conversation with the performers, and being announced as a pupil of Mr. Foote's, I did not receive any civility from them; for, if I was a blockhead, I was not worth their notice; and if an impudent imitator or mimic of their profession, bred by Mr. Foote in the same worthy art, I was, in their opinion, a despicable intruder. I could conceive all this, and certainly my situation on this critical night was not to be envied, as their sentiments, though not avowed, were the result of nature. I, on reflection, soon grew weary of my solitary seat in the green-room, alone in a crowd; and between the play and farce looked through a hole in the curtain, and beheld an awful, pleasing sight —a crowded, splendid audience—such as might strike the boldest with dismay.

"The farce began, and Mr. Foote gained great applause, and roars of laughter succeeded. In the second act my time of trial drew near; in about ten minutes I was called —'Mr. Wilkinson! Mr. Wilkinson!' Had I obeyed a natural impulse, I was really so alarmed that I should have run away. But honor pricked me on—there was no alternative—my brain was a chaos; but on I went, and must have made a very sheepish, timid appearance, as, from fear,

late illness, and apprehension, I trembled like a frightened clown in a pantomime: which Foote perceiving, good-naturedly took me by the hand and led me forward; when the burst of applause was wonderful, and apparently that of kindness and true benevolence; but it could not instantly remove my timidity, and I had no prompter to trust to, as all depended on myself.

"Foote perceiving I was not fit for action, said to his two friends on the stage (seated like Smith and Johnson in the 'Rehearsal'): 'This young gentleman is merely a novice on the stage; he has not yet been properly drilled. But come, my young friend, walk across the stage; breathe yourself, and show your figure.' I did so; the walk encouraged me, and another loud applause succeeded. I felt a glow, which seemed to say, 'What have you to fear! Now, or never. This is the night that either makes you or undoes you quite.' And on the applause being repeated, I said to myself, 'That is as loud as any I have heard given to Mr. Garrick.' I mustered up courage, and began with Mr. Luke Sparks, of London (brother to Isaac Sparks, then in Dublin), in the character of Capulet: most of the gentlemen in the boxes knew all the London players, and no play in London was so familiar then as 'Romeo and Juliet.' They were universally struck with the forcible manner of the speaking, and the striking resemblance of the features; a particular excellence in my mode of mimicry. A gentleman cried out, 'Sparks of London! Sparks of London!' The applause resounded, even to my astonishment; and the audience were equally amazed, as they found *something*, where they in fact expected *nothing*. Next speech was their favorite Barry in 'Alexander'; universally known, and as universally felt. I now found myself vastly elevated and clever: fear was vanished, and joy and pleasure succeeded; a proof what barometers we

are! how soon elated, and how soon depressed! When quite at ease, I began with Mrs. Woffington in Lady Macbeth, and Barry in Macbeth. The laughter (which is the strongest applause on a comic occasion) was so loud and incessant, that I could not proceed. This was a minute of luxury; I was then in the region of bliss; I was encored; yet that lady had declared in London, on hearing I was to go with Foote to Ireland, 'Take me off! a puppy! —if he dare attempt it, by the living G—d he will be stoned to death.' Here the lady was mistaken; for, on repeating the part, the second applause was stronger than the preceding. A sudden thought occurred; I felt all hardy—all alert—all nerve—and immediately advanced six steps; and, before I spoke I received the full testimony of 'true imitation!' My master, as he was called, sat on the stage at the same time; I repeated twelve or fourteen lines of the very prologue he had spoken that night (being called for) to the 'Author,' and he had almost every night repeated: I, before Mr. Foote, presented his other self; the audience from repetition were as perfect as I was; his manner, his voice, his oddities, I so exactly hit, that the pleasure, the glee it gave, may easily be conceived, to see and hear the mimic mimicked, and it really gave me a complete victory over Mr. Foote; for the suddenness of the action tripped up his audacity so much, that he, with all his effrontery, sat foolish, wishing to appear equally pleased with the audience, but knew not how to play that difficult part: he was unprepared; the surprise and satisfaction were such, that, without any conclusion, the curtain was obliged to drop with reiterated bursts of applause.

"When the farce was concluded, I had great congratulations paid seriously and ironically. Mr. Foote affected to be vastly pleased, but in truth it was merely affectation—so differently do we feel for ourselves when ridicule is pointed

at us; but he said, it was perfectly well judged to make free with him, yet he did not think it very like himself, for it certainly was my worst imitation, but he rejoiced at my good fortune. In truth, Mr. Foote got the cash, not me; what I did was for him, as he acted on shares; and the fuller the house, the greater was his profit. He was piqued and chagrined.

"The conversation the next day, particularly of all my eager partial friends, was an universal cry of 'Foote outdone! Foote outdone! the pupil the master!' and this was greatly assisted by their agreeable disappointment; for I do not believe any one of them, however warm they might have been in their wishes for my welfare, but trembled for the event; they felt unhappy lest I should make a despicable attempt, and be universally disapproved; and then reflected within themselves, 'Good Heaven! what is to become of this poor youth? what can he do for a subsistence?' After my performance, from the success I had met with, I could neither eat, drink, nor sleep that night; pleasant dreams I needed not; my waking thoughts were so much superior.

"The 'Tea,' was acted in regular succession several nights, nay, it was commanded by the Duke and Duchess of Bedford; his Grace was at that time Lord Lieutenant.

"After the first night of my performance, Mr. Sheridan appointed me a salary of three guineas per week, and requested, with my approbation (which was readily obtained), that Mr. Foote would write to Mr. Garrick to grant permission for my continuance in Dublin till the end of February. Foote was obliged to go England with all speed, as he had stayed beyond his time; but I was left behind, waiting for Mr. Garrick's answer to Mr. Sheridan's request, but which soon arrived, and granted the petition requested by Mr. Foote."

One day when discussing a Benefit, the Manager suggested that the imitations would be more piquant if he made the actors of the theatre the subject of his exertions. The scene that followed was admirable. "I observed to him, that I had not had leisure to have paid a sufficient attention to that company, as objects for imitation; besides, were I capable, if I should take that freedom, they would most likely not only insult me, but make it a plea to refuse acting for my benefit. That argument seemed with Mr. Sheridan to have but little weight; he persisted angrily. I then intimated, that if I complied, I hoped he would not have any objection to my using his name, and that I did not do it of my own accord, but had his express command for that purpose. Mr. Sheridan seemed much vexed; said that what he had asked me to do was to get me applause, and to serve me, not himself; but he should by no means consent to my exposing the peculiarities of his actors and actresses under the sanction of his desire and approbation; he wished it to come before the audience as a sudden surprise, and as my own voluntary act, and after that had been done, he would have taken care to have had it so called for by the audience as to prevent a possibility of the performers' anger being of weight sufficient to prevent its repetition; and the more it vexed the actors and actresses, the greater relish it would give the audience: that I believe was too true.

"However, I continued my objection, but at last (like a fool in the knowledge of mankind and the human heart) a lucky bright thought, as I judged it, occurred to me; and I said, 'My good Mr. Sheridan, I have hit upon the very thing to establish myself as a favorite with you, and the town.' He seemed all impatience to know what it could be. 'My dear sir, a thought has just entered my pate, which I think will draw money, and be of infinite service to myself.' 'What is it? What is it?' says Sher-

idan, with the utmost eagerness. 'Why, sir,' says I, 'your rank in the theatre, and a gentleman so well known in Dublin, on and off the stage, must naturally occasion any striking imitation of yourself to have a wonderful effect. I have paid great attention to your whole mode of acting, not only since I have been in Dublin, but two years before, when you played the whole season at Covent Garden Theatre; and do actually think I can do a great deal on your stage with you alone, without interfering with any other actor's manner whatever.'

"Hogarth's pencil could not testify more astonishment; he turned red and pale alternately—his lips quivered. I instantaneously perceived I was in the wrong box; it was some time before he could speak—he took a candle from off the table, and showing me the room door—when at last his words found utterance—said, he never was so insulted. What! to be taken off by a buffoon upon his own stage! And as to mimicry, what is it? Why, a proceeding which he never could countenance; that he even despised Garrick and Foote for having introduced so mean an art; and he then very politely desired me to walk downstairs. Mr. Sheridan held the candle for me only till I got to the first landing, and then hastily removed it, grumbling and speaking to himself, and leaving me to feel my way in the dark down a pair and a half of steep stairs, and to guess my road in hopes of finding the street-door.

"After this fracas he never permitted me to play, or spoke to me during my stay in Ireland (my own night excepted). I fixed on 'Jane Shore' and 'Tom Thumb,' for my play and farce, on the night allotted me, Saturday, February 25, 1758.

"Mr. Chaigneau himself waited on Mrs. Fitzhenry to request her powerful assistance in Alicia, to which request she kindly assented.

"The rapid step from my late illness, extreme poverty, and friendless situation had taken such a turn, that with my coach, table acquaintance presents, and great benefit I thought my fortune made, and early in March, with true-felt gratitude, not from that day, week, or month, but never effaced to the present moment, now including above thirty-two years, I took leave of my good friends, in possession of two valuable gifts, health and wealth. Indeed to the wonderful care of these good and undescribable persons can I only attribute my existence, and also my wealth, as from that time, till encumbered with the cares of my present unpromising and perplexed state, I never knew, in the course of several years, the want of cash; which state of happiness my after frequent visits to Dublin made me, as a young man, in a kind of independence.

"With now 130*l.* in that pocket which a very few months before contained only two guineas (and which I then termed a treasure)—but good God! what a change!—like a ten-thousand-pound prize to a cobbler—I sailed from Ireland with a fair wind, attended by the waft of numberless good wishes for my safe arrival in Old England.

"Soon after my arrival, I presented myself with as much duty as pleasure to my dear mother, as every son should and ought to do, and am certain the return was overpaid by her. Her joy, surprise, and a thousand etceteras which may be supposed—and only affectionate and good mothers can feel such heavenly sensations: I do not speak from supposition, but can aver that though there was, is, and ever will be good parents, yet mine was really sprung from the tree called the Nonpareil; and I can with truth boast I possessed one truly praiseworthy quality, and that was, being one of the best sons, not from any merit as a duty from myself due to my mother, but because I loved and revered her worth, and conversed with my true friend.

The giving to her an account of my riches, and my friends in Ireland, was a feast; and my producing the 130*l.* bill was a dazzling sight indeed, though only in black and white letters."

III.

With this dangerous weapon of mimicry as stock in trade, the young man prospered in his career. His amusing gifts—invaluable at a supper—found him plenty of acquaintances, though not friends, for they involved him in many awkward positions. Nothing is more ludicrous than his sketch of Foote, and the trepidation and fury of the great mimic, when he found his own arms turned against himself, with the description of the contest in Garrick's breast, between satisfaction at seeing an enemy ridiculed, and what he felt was his duty. Indeed in the exhibition of the meaner corners of human character Wilkinson is excellent.

When he returned to town Mr. Garrick determined to bring the two mimics out in their Dublin entertainment, which was thus advertised:

"'DIVERSIONS OF THE MORNING.

Principal Characters,
Mr. FOOTE,
Mr. HOLLAND,
Mr. PACKER,
with others,
And Mr. WILKINSON,'

without my 'first appearance,' which certainly was unkind and unprecedented, as it did not introduce me to the candor of the public, which they ever grant to a young performer and novice on the stage. However, this is an after-thought; for I was at that time highly gratified with the large letters in which my name was printed, a foible

natural to every candidate. Soon after this farce was known by the town to be in rehearsal, some Mrs. Candour gave my friend Mrs. Woffington the alarm, who still lived and existed on the flattering hopes of once more captivating the public by her remaining rays of beauty (born to bloom and fade); and who declared she was astonished on hearing I had survived my presumption in Ireland, in daring there to take her off.

"On deliberation she deputed Colonel Cæsar to wait on Mr. Garrick. He said to Mr. Garrick, he should not be surprised if young Wilkinson had success on such an attempt; but as the performance might render her, as an actress, ridiculous, his intention as a visitor to Garrick was to inform him, if he permitted such procedure or achievement from Mr. Wilkinson on his stage, he must expect from him (Col. Cæsar) to be seriously called upon as a gentleman to answer it. Mr. Garrick immediately not only acquiesced, but expressed a detestation of any such performance (*bless his good-nature*), and coincided in opinion that such an attempt on the merits of Mrs. Woffington's acting would be illiberal and unwarrantable in the highest degree.

"The day before the piece was to be acted he summoned Foote and me, and related the above-mentioned particulars, and informed us that his word and honor were engaged to Colonel Cæsar that Mr. Wilkinson should not take the liberty to make any line, speech, or manner relative to Mrs. Woffington, or presume to offer or occasion any surmise of likeness, so as to give the least shadow of offence, on any account whatever. This I subscribed to on Mr. Garrick's commands, and Mr. Foote became my bail for the same—for Garrick was really on this matter very uneasy with Foote, and Wilkinson, his d—d exotics.

"The 'Diversions of the Morning' was at length pro-

duced in October, and to an overflowing theatre. Curiosity was universally raised to see Mr. Foote's pupil, as I was called, and to this hour by many believed. Mr. Foote's acquaintance were numerous, and of the first circles; and he took every precaution and care, for his own sake (for fear of failure or party), to have me strongly supported, and he blazed forth Wilkinson's wonderful merit, as on my success he intended what he put into execution, which was, to give me the laboring oar and make myself a number of implacable enemies: and as to the money I brought, he judged it only safe and fit for his own emolument.

"In the second act of the farce *he*, by his pupils, called me on as Mr. Wilkinson—Mr. Wilkinson! I was received with every pleasing token by the first audience in the world for candor and liberality—for such London certainly is when unbiased;—it most assuredly commands and deserves that appellation. The scene between Mr. Foote and myself went off with great *éclat;* on my departure from the stage, while he did his puppets, etc., the audience grew very impatient by seeing my exit, and judged that was all the new actor was to do; and, feeling a disappointment, from murmuring they grew impatient, and at last burst out into vehemently asking for Wilkinson, and desiring to be informed if that was the only performance they were to expect from that young gentleman. This loud interruption was not paying him his accustomed attention, and he seemed much nettled; however, he bowed, and said the new performer was only retired for a little respite necessary for his following part of the entertainment. This answer was approved, and Mr. Foote was proceeding, but the little clamor had reached and disturbed the minds of the gods, and John Bull, as well as their godships, thinking Mr. Foote meant to deprive them of part of their rights, though they could not tell what, as they had not all heard

Mr. Foote's apology distinctly, again repeated, 'Wilkinson! Wilkinson!' Foote at this second interruption grew really offended, and having secured the lower house, he stopped and said to Mr. Manly (Holland, who was on the stage with him), 'Did you ever hear such fellows? D—n it, they want the fifth act of a play before the second is over!' And as what he said generally passed current, this occasioned an universal roar, and all went on peaceably, and with great good-humor, till the appointed time for my second entrance, which was near the conclusion—the people eager to applaud they knew not why or what, but full of expectation that some strange performance was to be produced—and, indeed, to give an account of the approbation, the sudden effect, the incessant laughter, would argue so much of the fabulist, and of dear self, that it would surfeit even me to read; and if so, how would an entire stranger feel? why treat it with an angry or contemptuous opinion! Therefore let it suffice, that everything succeeded that night that could gratify the pride, vanity, and most sanguine wishes of a young man greedy for fame.

"The next night the house was jammed in every part—the morning of which it was strongly rumored that the actors of Covent Garden were highly enraged—that Mr. Sparks in particular was really disordered on the occasion. Mr. Holland called at the theatre, and informed Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote, he had actually heard that Mr. Sparks was so much hurt and unhappy, that he had taken to his bed and was dangerously ill; Foote immediately replied (in his laughing manner) that it could not be true, or, that it must be a d—d lie; for he had met his wife with two pounds of mutton-chops on a skewer for her husband's dinner. This impromptu occasioned a hearty green-room laugh; for the actors in general disliked Foote at that time, and did not relish his writings on account of the freedoms

he often took with the profession, as, when introduced, the actors and managers were generally mentioned in a degrading light. Though he knew the public relished the severity, yet in fact it was not generous or neat to dirty his own nest instead of cleansing the theatrical stable; and his having been free with the performer's mode of playing had occasioned very little regard from any, and from several a fixed hatred. He had a number of enemies in private life. Indeed many domestic characters severely felt his comic lash, which was smarting to those on whom it was inflicted; but still his universal acquaintance, his wit, humor, open house, and entertaining qualities raised him superior to his maligners, and in general he rolled in luxury and indolence. It would have been much more unfashionable not to have laughed at Foote's jokes than even at Quin's.*

"This little piece went on in a most flourishing state till about the fifth or sixth night, when Mr. Sparks of Covent Garden Theatre felt himself so wounded by my attack on his acting (which truly was a very picturesque one, and those who remember him and me at that time will allow what I have here said), that he waited on Mr. Garrick, and requested he would not suffer him, as a man of credit in private life, and an actor of estimation in public, to be destroyed by such an illiberal attack on his livelihood; and as it struck at his reputation, hoped he would not permit it in future as far as regarded himself, whom it had rendered miserable. Garrick said, 'Why now, hey, Sparks! why now, hey, this is so strange now, hey, a—why Wilkinson, and be d—d to him, they tell me he takes me off, and he takes Foote off, and so, why you see that you are in very good company.'—'Very true, sir,' says Sparks, 'but many an honest man has been ruined by keeping *too good*

* An excellent bit of character drawing.

*company;*' and then Sparks made his bow and his exit. Mr. Garrick, however, came to the theatre at noon, paraded with great consequence up and down the stage, sent for me, and when I obeyed the mighty summons he was surrounded by most of the performers. I fancied it had been some lucky, good-natured thought of his to serve me; but why should I have imagined so, for he soon convinced me to the contrary, as he began a fiery lecture with, 'Now, hey d—n it, Wilkinson!—now, why will you take a liberty with these gentlemen the players, and without my consent? You never consulted or told me you were *to take off* as you call it:—hey, why now, I never take such liberties. Indeed I once did it, but I gave up such d—d impudence. Hey now, that is I say—but you and Foote, and Foote and you, think you are managers of this theatre. But to convince you of the contrary, and be d—d to ye, I here order you, before these gentlemen, to desist from taking any liberty with any one of Covent Garden Theatre; and I think it necessary to avow and declare my abhorrence of what you have done, and at the same time to disclaim my consent or knowledge of it. I do not allow myself such unbecoming liberties, nor will I permit them from another where I am manager; and if you dare repeat such a mode of conduct after my commands, I will fine you the penalty of your article'—which was three hundred pounds. Here I felt myself in a fine predicament; here was a sudden fall to all my greatness, and a haste to my setting. The actors and actresses, one and all, applauded the goodness of Mr. Garrick's heart, and sneered at the lowered pride of an upstart mimic and his imitations. I was exceedingly embarrassed and mortified, when up came to me Dame Clive, who said aloud, 'Fie, young man! fie!' and declared it was imprudent and shocking for a young fellow to gain applause at the expense of the players.

'Now,' added she, 'I can and do myself *take off*, but then it is only the Mingotti,* and a set of Italian squalling devils who come over to England to get our bread from us; and I say curse them all for a parcel of Italian ——,' and so Madam Clive made her exit, and with the approbation of all the stage lords and ladies in waiting, whilst I stood like a puppy dog in a dancing school—when Mr. Mossop, the turkey-cock of the stage, with slow and haughty steps, all erect, his gills all swelling, eyes disdainful, and hand upon his sword, breathing, as if his respiration was honor, and like the turkey almost bursting with pride, began with much *hauteur:* 'Mr. Wilkinson! phew!' (as breathing grand) 'sir,—Mr. Wil—kin—son, *sir*, I say ——phew!—how dare you, sir, make free in a public theatre, or even in a private party, with your superiors? If you were to take such a liberty with me, *sir*, I would draw my sword and run it through your body, *sir!* you should not live, *sir!*'—and with the greatest pomp and grandeur made his departure. His supercilious air and manner were so truly ridiculous, that I perceived Mr. Garrick underwent much difficulty to prevent his gravity from changing to a burst of merriment; but when Mossop was fairly out of sight, he could not contain himself, and the laugh beginning with the manager, it was followed with avidity by each one who could laugh the most—and all anger with me was for a *few minutes* suspended. And certainly Mossop's Don Quixote-like manner was irresistibly diverting, and pleased every one but me, who stood all their brunts, for I did not feel myself in a cheerful mood; yet good-humor was so prevalent, that I could not refrain from smiling, and at this time can laugh very heartily whenever I bring the scene into my mind's eye. Presently entered

* Mingotti was the Mara of that year.

Foote, loudly singing a French song to show his breeding, and on seeing such a group of actors on the stage, pronounced, like Witwou'd, 'Hey day! what are you all got together here like players at the end of the last act!'—then said he had called at Mr. Garrick's house, and was informed he should find him at the theatre; for he wanted to fix on two or three plays wherein he would act on the nights of his 'Diversions in the Morning.' Mr. Garrick then assumed much serious consequence, and related to Mr. Foote the state of affairs—that he had received strong representations from Covent Garden Theatre, and had, from motives of humanity and consideration, resolved to put a stop to Wilkinson's proceedings, and that Mr. Tate must that night perform the part of Bounce only, and at his peril to disobey his orders; and that after his exit as Mr. Bounce, the piece must finish with Mr. Foote's performance, and no more Wilkinson. 'If, indeed now—if Wilkinson could have taken me off, as Mrs. Garrick says, why now as to that I should have liked it vastly, and so would Mrs. Garrick. But I again enforce Wilkinson's not appearing on my stage a second time;' and to my astonishment Foote assented; but had I been intimate or acquainted with chicanery and the mysteries behind the curtain of a London theatre (though to this hour I am not above half perfect), my wonder would not have been so great.

"I went from the playhouse in dudgeon, and retired home with a heavy mind, though only three hours before I had left my lodgings all elate, and with a heart as light as a feather. As the evening approached, I went and prepared myself for Bounce only, according to order, and when Bounce was finished retired to the green-room; but am certain both Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote had planted persons in the house to call for Wilkinson, because Mr.

Foote had not gone through half his performance when the call for me was universal; which could not have been the case, as it was a repeated piece, and the time not come for my second appearance as usual, had not subtlety been used in the business. The clamor continued when Mr. Foote retired from the stage, and Mr. Garrick ordered the lights to be let down, which consisted of six chandeliers hanging over the stage, every one containing twelve candles in brass sockets, and a heavy iron flourished and joined to each bottom, large enough for a street palisade. This ceremony being complied with, Mr. Garrick said it would, with the lamps also lowered, be a convincing proof to the audience that all was over; but this only served, like oil thrown on flames, to increase the vociferation. On Garrick's perceiving this, he came to me in the green-room, and with seeming anger and terror asked me, how I had dared to cause a riot and disturbance in his theatre, and send a set of blackguards into the house to call for me. All I could urge in my horrid situation was, asserting my ignorance of the matter, which was of no avail; and while I was proceeding with my asseveration in *piano*, the *forte* broke out into outrageous tumult. What was to be done? I replied, I would run away; but that, Mr. Garrick said, as matters stood, could not be suffered. 'Foote! —Foote!—Foote!' was echoed and re-echoed from every part of the house: he had been standing with the most perfect ease, and laughing all the time; but being thus loudly summoned, obeyed the call of duty, and on the stage instantly presented himself; and when there was interrogated why Mr. Wilkinson's part of the farce that had been so well received was omitted. Mr. Foote made an harangue, and observed, if honored with their patience to hear him, he would endeavor to explain, and he hoped to their satisfaction; on this silence ensued. He said, he

was exceedingly sorry to have given cause for being called to an account for any motive of their displeasure. But very unfortunately what had only been humbly offered as harmless, had been basely misconstrued into wickedness; for Mr. Garrick and himself (Mr. Foote) had received remonstrances and cruel reflections from certain performers, alleging that they suffered in their reputations; and as reputations were not slender materials, in consequence thereof Mr. Garrick and himself, from motives of generosity, had yielded to such importunity and allegations, and had cheerfully sacrificed that part of the entertainment; as by so doing they added happiness and private peace to others, however beneficial the continuance of it might have been to the theatre; and ardently hoped their conduct on the occasion, was such as merited not only the pardon, but the approbation of the audience, and which should ever be their study to merit and obtain.

"This declamation, instead of pacifying, was treated with marks of anger and contempt, and an universal cry for Wilkinson!—Wilkinson! On which Mr. Foote advanced once more, and said, as for his own peculiarities, if they could afford the least entertainment, Mr. Wilkinson was at full liberty to exercise his talents to their utmost extent; and then added *archly* (for the which I have reason to think the manager did not find himself in the least obliged), he believed, nay was assured, Mr. Wilkinson might as far as respected Mr. Garrick, without any restrictions, take the same freedom. The cry was for me immediately to appear, and that without delay; Mr. Foote promised I should be instantly produced, and took leave with a general plaudit. It may easily be supposed mine was a perplexed state, being in every point circumstanced very disagreeably, and not a friend to speak to me. On Mr. Foote's return to the green-room, he laid hold of my

arm, and said I must go on the stage that moment. 'And what must I do when I am there?' says I. 'O!' replied he, 'anything—what you like; and treat them with as much of me as you please.' "Ay,' but says I, 'what does Mr. Garrick say? for without his orders I cannot proceed.' 'Hey—why now—hey!' says Garrick, 'why now, as they insist, I really do not see that I am bound to run the hazard of having a riot in my theatre to please Sparks and the rest of the Covent Garden people; and if they are not satisfied with your serving up Mr. Foote as a dish—why, it is a pity, as I to-day observed, but you could give me; but that you say is not possible with any hopes of success. Why now—haste—they are making a devilish noise; and so, as you have begun your d—d taking off—why go on with it, and do what comes into your head, and do not in future plague me with your cursed tricks again.' So Sam Foote popped the *Exotic* on the stage; there was no time to be lost, as they feared bad consequences. I was afraid to go on, but on the stage I was actually pushed by Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote, and my hair did stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. The curtain was dropped, and the branches also down on each side. My fright was apparent, but Mr. Town soon cheered my spirits, as there was not one dissenting voice in the whole audience. I began, and very freely, with Mr. Foote, and then was for retiring, but the cry was, 'No, no—go on, go on!' and many said aloud, 'D—n it, take them all off!' I took the hint, and was encouraged at so furious a rate, that I went through a long course of mimicry with great *éclat*, having permission, as I thought. My distress of the morning all vanished, and was exchanged for the most delightful feelings in the evening; being all elated, and on a short reflection, relying on Garrick's declaration, as the words of truth, when he had twice declared nothing could

please him or Mrs. Garrick more than a well-executed likeness of himself as an actor. But note, good reader, in this point I had not acted with honor, but duplicity; for whenever he had jokingly asked me 'What sort of a subject I could make of him?' I always answered, 'I never could form any resemblance whatever; for his manner and tones were so natural, and his voice so melodious, that any imitation was impossible.' This he greedily swallowed and believed (charming flattery!); but in the close of my performance that remarkable night, the audience were wonderfully surprised and tickled on beholding so unexpectedly a resemblance of the incomparable Roscius; which increased my spirits to such a degree, that I determine to give the audience a good meal; and, finding my first attack had made a favorable impression in their opinions, I advanced without mercy, cried havoc, and produced Mr. Garrick in three characters. And at the last line I made my finish and exit in his manner, with loud acclamations, and was all alive, alive O! But for me personally to recite these peculiarities, would give a much better idea than even the ablest pen can possibly describe.

"After this night all opposition or affront was dropped, and the enraged performers were advised to let me die a natural death, as the most prudent method; for, by opposite means, they rendered Wilkinson popular, and by not taking umbrage he would sink into insignificancé. The farce was continued and gained additional force; and Mr. Foote, as he reaped the profit, was highly enraptured, and said Wilkinson was very clever. He was the general, receiving high and honorary rewards, whilst, in fact, I was merely held in rank as a poor subaltern at low pay, for standing to be shot at. Mr. Garrick, who felt aggrieved from what he had himself desired me to do, and what I had acted by his request and permission, blamed *me* (as is natural in most

cases) rather than *himself*, and not being my friend, it served to increase his spleen and dislike."

## IV.

Not long after this scene he went down on an engagement to the Portsmouth Theatre, where a company of the usual *bizarre* elements had been hastily got together, among whom was a Miss Kitty White and her mother,—a strange being belonging to the race of "*actresses' mamas*"—and who is thus roughly sketched.

"Mrs. White, the mother, was a most extraordinary character, and worthy of record; far from wanting sense and observation, she was quick, lively, cunning, and sagacious, but had passions that outstripped the wind, yet good-natured at times. All this variety, as differently tuned for good or ill temper, was aided by the finest slip-slop collection of words imaginable, that made her in truth, not only to myself, but to many others, an inexhaustible fund of entertainment, and she was to me beyond compare the most diverting old lady I ever met with. Whenever Burden, her son-in-law, gave offense, which was almost perpetually, she used thus to harangue her daughter: 'Ma'am, you have married a feller beneath you—you played Lucy last night in the 'Minor' better than Mrs. Cibber could have done upon my soul, and yet this scoundrel would hurt such a divine cretur!' 'True, mama,' replied her daughter, 'but suppose he should in despair and rage cut his throat?' 'Cut his throat! let him cut his throat and go to the devil; but he won't cut his throat, no such good luck. But I'll tell you what, ma'am, if you contradict me I'll fell you at my feet, and trample over your corse, ma'am, for you are a limb, ma'am; your father on his death-bed told me you were a limb. You are pure as ermind, ma'am, except with Sir Francis Dolvol (Delaval), and you sha'n't live with your

husband, ma'am; you have no business to live with your husband; the first women of quality, ma'am, don't live with their husbands, ma'am. Does Mrs. Elmy live with her husband? No, ma'am. Does Mrs. Clive live with her husband? No, ma'am. Does Mrs. Cibber live with her husband? No, ma'am. So now, ma'am, you see the best women of fashion upon earth don't live with their husbands, ma'am.' And thus concluded one of this good lady's harangues. In short, this old gentlewoman was the delight of myself and company, and to those in particular who knew her—and her acquaintance was not confined. She pleased me so much that I should tire the reader with the subject, and make him skip from page to page, so will leave my dear Mrs. White for the present, proceed to business, and introduce, at some future opportunity, that lady into good company."

Admiral Rodney and the fleet were now at Portsmouth, and in every audience there was of course a strong nautical flavor. Trying to gratify these patrons, the following little adventure befell Mr. Wilkinson. It is a perfect picture, and told dramatically.

"On Monday, July 23, 1759, I acted Hamlet, Mr. Moody the grave-digger. As I was paying attention, in the fifth act, to Mr. Moody's grave-digger, Mr. Kennedy (the manager) plucked me by the sleeve, and said, 'Mind what you do, for Mr. Garrick is in the pit!' It rather alarmed me, but having time before my entrance to reconnoitre, and not finding any likeness, I looked upon it as a joke; and not hearing from any person that he had been seen, and so well known, I went out to supper and stayed late. But the next morning I was waked by a messenger from the Fountain Tavern, with Mr. Garrick's invitation to breakfast; I was of course astonished at such an unexpected visitant at Portsmouth, and wondered still more at the

occasion, which in my hurried thoughts I could not devise. I instantly returned an answer that I would with pleasure wait on him, hastily equipped myself, and entered the room that great personage then graced, made my bow, and received a very hearty and friendly greeting. Here was a change! On this wonderful greeting we were the most cordial, good, easy acquaintance that can be imagined: we chatted agreeably, for he seemed as pleased as I really was at this astonishing alteration.

"After breakfast we walked on the ramparts, and then went to the dock-yards; he was in such good spirits that he ordered a bottle of hock to be made into a cool tankard, with balm, &c. It was at noon in the height of summer, and the heat was his excuse for so extraordinary a draught before dinner.

"My reader may be certain that whenever Mr. Garrick chose to throw off acting and dignity, and was not surrounded by business to perplex him, he had it in his power to render himself a most pleasing, improving, and delightful companion.

"Mr. Garrick's walking arm-in-arm with me was an honor I dreamed not of. He congratulated me on being so great a favorite; and what he said was of much more service, he being so well acquainted with the leading people at that place, of which, by inquiry, he soon heard all particulars: told me he was on a visit at Dr. Garney's, a gentleman of eminence who lived at Wickham, about eight miles from Portsmouth, to the left of Portsdown, once a physician, but had given over practicing, his fortune being fully equal to ease and affluence. Mr. Garrick told me this visit had been for years promised, but not paid till now; said that Dr. Garney was an old and intimate friend, and he should be there seven or eight days: Mrs. Garrick was there, and had sent him as a messenger, with Dr. Gar-

ney's compliments and her commands to insist that I would fix my own day, and give them the pleasure of my company, which visit they would all return. 'So Tate,' says my kind Mr. Garrick, 'mind you are well provided, for we shall make it early in next week.' This obliging invitation I gladly complied with, dressed in my best, and even of that he took notice, and said all was well except my buckles, which being (in the present fashion) large and low on the instep, he observed were like a sailor's. I did not want for lace to make me a gentleman—not absurd then—but such a figure now would be laughed at as it passed along.

"Mr. Garrick received me at the Doctor's more like his son than merely a common acquaintance to whom he meant only to be civil and well-bred. Nor was Mrs. Garrick a jot less kind; she scorned to be outdone in courtesy, and met me with all that apparent regard as if a beloved relation had just arrived from the East Indies. She was in truth a most elegant woman:—grace was in her step. I was introduced to Dr. Garney, his lady, and son, and after that to company who were quite strangers to me. They appeared just like what were their universal well-known characters, everything that was good, with power and will to render their pleasant mansion a happy resort for their acquaintance. The situation was a little paradise in every respect that art and nature could contribute to make so; it appeared to me to much advantage, as the four immediate miles from Portsmouth till you reach Hilsey barracks, the country is very indifferent, very dreary, and all confined; for those four miles are regular fortifications, ditches with draw-bridges, &c.

"My entertainment for the day (for I was at Dr. Garney's before twelve) was as if calculated to please a man of fashion. As to Mr. Garrick, he, being much the youngest

man of the two, took me (for two hours) to every part of the house and garden that was worth observation, and to the high top of an observatory, built by the Doctor for study, curiosity, and prospect, and very near equal to that just mentioned of Portsdown. Mr. Garrick ran and skipped about like a lad of twenty. Indeed civility and kindness seemed the study of the day from him and the whole family, and were visibly the intention and practice towards me.

"Mr. Garrick had heard my benefit was over; but when I informed him I was to have another, he strongly recommended my night to the patronage of that worthy family; and said he would take it equally as an obligation conferred on himself, if bestowed on his friend Mr. Wilkinson (there was honor!)—for I was a youth whose prosperity he had at heart, because I was deserving; and added, unless that had been his opinion of me he had not invited or recommended me to the honor of Dr. Garney's friendship. After tea, coffee, &c., we finished the evening with playing at bowls on the green and in walking. I did not leave Wickham till ten o'clock at night, and received a general invitation to make that house my own, whenever convenience permitted or inclination prompted me. I remember when talking of plays that day after dinner, Mr. Garrick said that he never acted but to one bad house, and that was Abel Drugger, when there was not 40*l.* in the theatre.

"On my departure from this so truly agreeable day, never to be obliterated, Mr. Garrick jokingly said, he hoped there would not be any impropriety in bespeaking a play for Friday, 'and we desire, Wilkinson, you will fix on a favorite character, and do your best for the credit of both; and d—n it, Tate, Mrs. Garrick expects you will have a dish of tea ready after her jaunt, by way of relaxation; and if you disappoint us, Dr. and Mrs. Garney, and all the party will be very angry; therefore take care. All

these requests I assured him should be complied with. He escorted me to my chaise, and for the second time in his life made me very happy; for I on my part never wanted gratitude or a pride to obtain his good opinion. But our state of mind so fluctuates that it is merely a common barometer—'*Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.*

"I had promised more, much more than I could make good, for I had not the least doubt but any play I appointed would be granted servilely with a bow, when authorized by the name of Garrick. Here, however, I was mistaken, for the next day when I summoned the company, the three or four theatrical potentates in power pertaining to the petty state were very refractory, each wanting to be principal on the occasion; and by a majority of votes I lost my lieutenancy; nor was I myself, for Mr. Moody was not suffered on any account to be capital on this occasion.

"A Mr. White was the yearly Garrick, whose fame sounded and resounded from the county of Devon to the bounds of Hampshire; therefore neither he nor they would permit any display of mine, as each wanted to be a surprising actor, and be elected by due right of merit in Drury Lane house of lords and commons. Says the morning gin and brandy-cag hero, with a face unknown to cleanliness, speaking *g* affectedly, and leaving out the letter *r*, 'Why is Mr. Wilkinson to appoint a play for this Mr. Ga—ick? Who is Mr. Ga—ick? Mr. Ga—ick has no command over our company at Portsmouth'—and with the utmost nonchalance said, 'Mr. Ga—ick cannot, I think, be displeased with *my* Macheath, though I want no *favor* from Mr. Ga—ick'—assuring himself thereby of showing even Garrick—'*here* you shall see what you shall see,' and by that performance be engaged at Drury Lane, and make king David tremble.

"So Mr. White, who was lord paramount, after as much

altercation as would settle an address to the Minister, fixed on the 'Beggar's Opera,' Friday—Macheath, Mr. White, and Mr. Moody was permitted to have the honor of acting Lockit. I was allowed to give 'Tea,' and by particular desire, to please me, was added the 'Author,' Cadwallader by me of course. It was with difficulty I could reserve twelve *good* seats, as all the genteel people, on hearing that Mr. Garrick and his lady were to be there, had crowded early to the theatre. The first act was finished and no Mr. Garrick had appeared, and on the second act beginning, the audience and the performers blamed me for having asserted a falsehood, and by way of a hum collected them to be disappointed; and I really began to think it strange myself; but to my great relief and satisfaction, about the middle of the second act, in my party came, which was to me a gratifying triumph, as Mr. White was very angry at having played so much of his Macheath and Mr. Ga—ick not present. They were soon settled and paid much attention, and very considerately and kindly Mr. and Mrs. Garrick and their party made a point of obliging me by conferring strong marks of approbation.

"Mr. Garrick was so pleased with my friend Mr. Moody, in Lockit, that he sent for him the next morning and engaged him for the ensuing season, at a salary of thirty shillings per week, because, he told him, he *loved to encourage merit!* Mr. Garrick, after the farce, came round and insisted on my supping with them at the Fountain Tavern; the noble troop of strangers were much increased by the addition of several gentlemen, particularly as all the medical people of consequence belonging to the place went to pay their compliments to their acquaintances, Dr. Garney and family, and also to Mr. and Mrs. Garrick. Mrs. Garrick very politely thanked me for my performance, which before so many people certainly appeared respectful, atten-

tive, and kind; and I judged my fortune made. O fickle fortune!

"About half-past twelve Mrs. Garrick was for retiring, and as one of Dr. Garney's friends had provided them beds (not suffering them to sleep at the tavern), Mrs. Garrick had to walk up the street to her destined apartment; Mr. Garrick, who never failed in attention to his lady, would not trust her to the servant's care only, but would himself attend her, and then return back to the company. He observed I came that evening in a very large, handsome sea-captain's cloak, which he said he admired much, and he would with my leave wear it to attend Mrs. Garrick to her residence. All the ladies went at the same time to private houses, and the great little man wrapped himself in my *then* honored roquelaure. He soon returned, said he was pleased with his walk, as it had made him so well acquainted with my cloak, and which he thought would be so comfortable for the winter, that if he had one, many a walk should he take in it, instead of going in a sedan from Southampton Street to Drury Lane; therefore requested I would not leave Portsmouth without procuring such another, and take it to London for him.

"The evening was very chatty; he had all attention paid him, and in consequence showed himself to great advantage. He asked me if I had seen '*that d—d Foote?*' I answered 'No.' To which he replied with vehemence, he hoped, for my sake, I never would, if I could avoid it, either see or speak to him again. What all this violent kindness proceeded from I never could account for. However, I thought then, and do to this hour think myself highly obliged; for, to the observer, it bore every mark of sincere benevolence and regard.

"It was three in the morning before the party broke up —a very uncommon hour for him; he took a most cordial

and friendly leave, and I was much pleased with my affable and agreeable entertainment, and wished him a good-morning, and a safe and pleasant journey to his seat at Hampton Court, for which place he was to set forward in two or three days. . . .

"My second benefit was on Wednesday—*Douglas*, *Tea*, and *Lethe*. I thought it would be rude and impolitic, when this ceremony grew near, if I did not, according to the repeated invitations I had received, wait on Dr. Garney at Wickham. I hired the handsomest horse I could, thinking that a post chaise for the day looked idle as well as extravagant for a distance of only eight miles, though not a sailor in Portsmouth but would have proved a better jockey than myself. To make which clear, I must relate my John Gilpin's ride to Wickham, which has made me dread horseback ever since. I had seldom used myself to that mode of traveling; for though I had frequently gone from London to Hampton Court and Richmond, yet it was generally in a post chaise, which ever was and is my favorite method of passing from place to place.

"The ostler of the Fountain brought to my door a very fine-looking horse, and observing I wore spurs, said, 'Pray, Mr. Wilkinson, do you often ride on horseback?' I assured him the contrary: 'Because,' added he, 'I beg then, sir, as you are not a jockey, that I may take them off, for the horse I have brought is so very spirited, it may be dangerous for you to keep them on.' To this disarrangement I assented, and for the first mile, though hemmed in by the draw-bridges and going on gently, found it was very difficult, either by giving the horse his own way or checking him, to keep him within the power of my art of horsemanship, but entertained hopes when I got into the open road, by putting him into a canter, that I should do very well. By degrees the horse seemed wisely to comprehend that

his own self-will and sagacity were superior to his rider's; my ignorance was manifest to the animal, and as he was fully convinced I assumed a government to which I was not by any means competent, he was determined on rebellion, and to himself usurped the reins of power. The renewal of it to my fancy, even now, makes me giddy, and I verily believe from that hour my brain was weakened, which must plead some apology; and it is a remark of truth, that in almost every accident, whether by falls downstairs or in the street, from six years old my unfortunate head has always suffered.

"After having achieved nearly two miles with safety, my Bucephalus set off like mad, I not being able by any means to keep my saddle, but sat in a state of fear and terror. In about half a mile, after he had got into this wild freak, in the narrow road, I met the London wagon, where with care there was scarce room to pass by it, but to which this dreadful beast rushed. The wheel stopped and checked my right leg and brought me to the ground, and on my fall the horse's hind foot struck my jaw, and made it bleed most plentifully. Providentially, the men stopped the wagon, but almost against their will, for they could not conceive, from the fury of the beast, and the supposed misguided rage of the rider, but I was some foolish mad fellow eager to show my horsemanship, neck or nothing.

"The wagoners behaved with more civility than is usual for such animals; for in general they certainly are merely such. They only damned me for *a fewl;* for they were *right zure I mun be mad to ride dumbbeast to fright the wagon like.* But when I declared my innocence, as to any intended violence on their carriage, and told them the real cause, they thought it a very good joke—and pronounced 'I should never be a sportsman sufficient to win the King's plate at Newmarket.'

"While I was wiping off the dust and blood, and was really much bruised, and with reason alarmed—for had not the wagoners, from seeing Gilpin's certain danger, stopped the wagon, I must have experienced a shocking death, by being crushed under the wheels, near thirty years before this day of relation, or at best I could only have existed as a dreadful spectacle—the gay mettled courser, having disengaged himself of his rider, was all the time feeding on such odd bits of grass as he could find. I was helped on his back, and reassumed the reins with as much ease as if no accident had occurred, and I had only mounted a lady's gentle pad.

"The wagoners desired me not to ride again like a devil upon the king's highroad, for I might have seen *wagon like*, and at the same time have seen there was not room to pass it; and poor beast was so quiet, it must have been all my fault. I bore this second lecture with patience, so thanked Mr. Wagoner, and proceeded on my journey; for as to dwelling longer on my ignorance, it was sufficiently explained, and would have only increased their contempt, not created pity, and therefore would be a loss of time to us all, as our journey's end was quite contrary to attain.

"I determined to be very steady, and not venture on the perilous canter any more; a gentle trot at the most was to suffice, and that with all precaution. We were jogging on, as if by mutual agreement, with great regularity and composure, when an officer, who was going to Hilsey barracks, cried out, 'Your friend Scott dines at Hilsey—do come to dinner, Wilkinson,'—and went galloping on; my fiery-footed steed, scorning to be outdone in courtesy, obeyed the summons with the utmost swiftness, not by any means waiting to hear or consult my opinion as to the invitation, while, Gilpin like, I held by the pummel of the saddle out of breath, and expected every instant my neck

would be broke. I was at the last gasp with this devil of a horse; for the officer had no thought but I was determined to outride him and be at Hilsey the first. I found pulling, or holding, like Major Sturgeon, by the mane, was all to no purpose, and every moment supposed I should be sprawling on the ground; but on seeing the turnpike I cried out aloud, 'Shut the gate! Murder! murder! For God's sake shut the gate!' At first they did not comprehend me, but on observing my awkward manner of riding on this my flying-horse, and my continued cry of 'Shut the gate,' they did so before I got to it; then another fear instantly arose, which was that of the horse's despising the barred gate and leaping over it, which if he had, there would have been one Major Sturgeon less in the theatrical world; but fortunately the creature, either in pity to my fears or regard for his own limbs, or from the custom of stopping at the gate (which I cannot pronounce), halted there, and that suddenly, on a supposition, may be, that the King's duty was necessary to be loyally paid; to which he was possibly daily accustomed; and to my astonishment, in the midst of horrors, he pleasingly surprised me by so doing, for he seemed equal to any mad exploit whatever. Here I stayed and got a glass of water, and from the turnpike for about a mile to the left, on the irregular paths of Portsdown, I expected he had settled to reason, and had tried my skill in horsemanship sufficiently; but on the up-hill and down-dale once more he began, and more swift than ever, without a chance of my meeting with any cottage, or modern shepherd or shepherdess, in case of accident or misfortune, having quite left the public road. For me to expatiate on the wonders I this day performed in the noble art of vaulting horsemanship, might make young Astley fearful of a rival, and dare me to a trial of skill. The sensible beast certainly knew what an insignificant

Major he had on his back, and determined to make a frisky day of it at my expense. I was in hopes, till he took his third unlucky frolic, all would have been well, and that the headstrong servant was sensible of the errors he had already committed, and I began to fancy myself an elegant prancer, when he rapidly flew with me to a precipice of very considerable height, where I thought he would, for his own sake, have stopped his career; but to convince me he was superior to fear, and scorned even imminent danger, down he plunged headlong to the bottom.

"It needs not the traveler's talent to point mine out as a frightful situation in every respect, as myself and horse had taken the dreadful plunge; I in idea gave up the ghost, thinking all was inevitably over, and that there was not a possibility of life being preserved; this was momentary. Ease from pain brings death, and so with me. It was, I guess, some minutes before I recovered from the shock of the fall, or to the least ray of restored senses; but, thank God Almighty, they did return by degrees, though sickness was violent, the horse still lying on my thigh, my head was on the hilly part, and the horse's feet at the bottom, which kept part of his weight from crushing my thigh.

"After finding I had so miraculously escaped with life, I was fearful, as my right leg and thigh felt so much stunned, that they were broken; but by degrees, pulling at the rough hill gently, I got my left foot equal to push on the saddle and so relieved myself, but yet doubted whether I was not in the Elysian Fields; I was in such a state of perturbation and misery, with pain, sickness, and wonder, that it was a delirium. When I was more collected, I looked at the horse, as he lay almost lifeless, and by his not making any attempt to move, I feared his limbs had suffered, and that, I supposed, would make it an expensive ride, added to my surgeon's bill. Staying there would not do

at any rate, so as soon as I was able to get on my legs I slid to the bottom, took hold of the bridle, and the horse with great difficulty arose, and was as patient as a pet lamb: I winded him round and round the rugged place as well and as gently as I could, till by slow degrees, aided by that sweet maid Patience, I got him out of the dreary depth, and once more attained a part appertaining to Portsdown Hills. Notwithstanding my third disaster, I again had courage to mount, being only about two miles from Dr. Garney's, and we proceeded with all the regularity and gravity of Don Quixote to the wished-for villa, and arrived at it after all my fatigues, troubles, and hair-breadth scapes, and falling headlong down the deep Tarpeian rock. The Doctor and his son were out, and not expected home till dinner. When I had related the story of my woes to Mrs. Garney, she was greatly alarmed, and wished much for the Doctor's returning that he might immediately bleed me, which she insisted was a ceremony necessary to be instantly performed. I agreed in opinion with her; but as the Doctor's coming might not be for two hours, I retired to be brushed, washed, &c., which was absolutely needful, and it much refreshed me. I then desired the favor of a bottle of Madeira, but Mrs. Garney did not approve of it; and, instead of that potation, recommended more harts-horn and water; but I told her that I had, on my arrival, been well provided by her kindness with plenty of the watery element, and now really wished for something else, and thought Madeira would do wonders. She shook her head on hearing this, and went out of the room. As I was preparing myself for dinner, she politely sent me the Madeira, and I most eagerly drank a full tumbler of it, and it revived me wonderfully; but prudence prevented my increasing the draught, for by my good will, as I was so thirsty and hot, and the Madeira had gone down so deli-

ciously, I could have finished the bottle; but well it was I did not, for in my hurried state of spirits, and being bruised from head to foot, it might have proved a more certain road to death than any dagger I had ever struck, or any draught of poison I had ever swallowed, as a stage patriot, for the good of my country.

"The Doctor and his son did not return till near four, above two hours after I had arrived on my prancing Bucephalus. I was well refreshed, and my face was in tolerable order, all considered, though it was much scratched and wounded. Mrs. Garney represented my story in most tragical colors; which, had it been so well told before I had drunk the Madeira, she might have gained my consent for being bled, as I expected it after the violent fall I had endured: but on growing better, and thinking the Madeira had done everything that was necessary, all reasons or persuasions were in vain, for I obstinately refused, and said I wished for dinner, and that was preferable to being bled. At last the Doctor's kind intentions yielded to my petulance, and the sight of the good dinner seemed to be the most prevailing argument on all sides; the lancets were changed for knives and forks, and I performed with those weapons more dexterously than I or any person at table expected. We drank Mr. and Mrs. Garrick's health.

"The Doctor inquired when my benefit was; I told him: he asked for tickets, which I could not have thought of carrying there in my pocket, because a gentleman had invited me to dinner. However, he begged leave to present me with three guineas for three box tickets, which I was to send him. I accepted the king's pictures, and of course sent three scraps of paper in exchange. He desired I would come once more before I went to London: I accordingly visited that pleasant, hospitable spot again, but

it was in a post chaise, *not on horseback. No more of that —no more of that.*

"On my return the horse either walked or went a gentle trot all the way to Portsmouth, and when in the public road, though several gentlemen were returning from their evening's ride, he was as easily conducted as if he had never been obstreperous. Every one was astonished when I related my adventures; and, but that they had a good opinion of my veracity, and seeing the marks on my face, and my naming the wagoners and turnpike-man as witnesses, my story would not have been credited; for the horse was so gentle, and so easily guided, they said that every one must conclude the rider was the most to blame.

"The want of judgment in me might in part have been the cause; but from the circumstance of the ostler's taking off my spurs, it was evident he treated his riders every now and then with a frolic; and I guess his fall had made him feel pain, and find he was in an error when he cut that caper of enchantment which bereft me of my senses; and had he not had that fall I think he would have finished my career, and effectually have prevented my ever seeing old Portsmouth again.

"I do not recollect many particulars relating to this summer campaign worth setting down, so will suppose my Portsmouth engagement ended, and greatly to my advantage. But now, though not an old man, melancholy reflection tells me that, were I to set my foot in that town, there is not one man or woman, gentleman or gentlewoman existing whom I should know. All gone! gone! But why should I moralize, reflect on, or regret the certain fate of all mankind? Is there a wonder in so well proved a certainty?"

## V.

Nothing is more pleasant than the shrewd old actor's remarks on the habits and manners of his profession: and players of our day who are addicted to what they call "gagging" might profitably consider his reflections on the subject, as well as the amusing illustrations he furnishes.

"Nothing but severe reprobation and anger will effectually cure laughing at the audience, and entertaining themselves with low jokes; . . . and too often the manager is blamed for not preventing such impromptus, which is not in his power; and even the females staring into the stage-boxes and smiling at their acquaintance, acting all to the pit, not directing their discourse to the person on the stage, and Horatio, though so enjoined to attend the business of the play, employs all that time by apparently numbering the house. If the actors wish for regard, they should treat the theatre each morning certainly with the same degree of respect they would observe in the most common school-room; rehearse the play with serious attention, and not with riot and discord; thereby giving the stage opponents such full scope to exclaim, that the theatre proves itself a school of anarchy and disorder by the perpetual slander many performers bestow on their colleagues; for a roll more in one house on a benefit than in another will raise a jealousy not to be subdued for a month. A little application to the study of authors and criticisms in general would mend many actors and actresses; but rehearsals too frequently resemble a game at school-boys' play, and instead of preparing for the stage like gentlemen, they are acting in the style and behavior of Christmas street country mummers.

"Do not let the reader conceive the theatre such a bear-garden as to render this picture necessary for the performers

in the country in general. Far from it; I am only speaking the sentiments of liberal minds, who are hurt at seeing such vulgar and unpardonable behavior from a few egregiously ill-bred, whom reasoning would only inflame and make their company still worse: and the audience have often too much patience when they pass over such repeated faults by too much indulgence, which the wrong-headed actor places to approbation and his own merit. . . .

"Actors should never run into debt (a hard injunction)! for they may be assured a day of payment will be expected, and what is worse, that *one* such black sheep gives the idea of dishonesty to a whole troop; which is very hard, and might with propriety be thrown on any other profession, that many should be blamed for the faults of a few.

"Running into debts that can be avoided lessens in every degree the actor's darling passion, that is, his ideal consequence; and there is another that actors incur, which manifests negligence, and is, as Mr. Garrick told Shuter, *not to be too comical. O comical actor! it is a debt and a dangerous debt, not easily forgot or forgiven; for how can the performer think that though perhaps the town last night laughed and gave indulgence, that he is free? so far from it, he has lost the golden ore, their good opinion, and it will take a long time to regain it: for the actor is dreadfully wrong who thinks, because himself and friends laugh at what is termed jokes out of all time, place, and character, it is forgiven in general, and not set down against him, and mentioned for a twelvemonth at least* by the judicious; and though this may be cruel, it is in some degree just, and should not be so frequently deserved. *I would have all thirst for applause, but let the means pursued be professional and characteristic to deserve it.*

"In London an actor must be at least near right before he is established; out of London an actor seldom gets into favor or popularity, but he too frequently in consequence

leaves the right road for the wrong, that is, he studies to quit nature, and endeavors to obtain *false* applause by any means, no matter how acquired :—'that is villainous,' and in the end it destroys the good seeds of promise and proves a pitiful ambition in the knave that uses it, be he a tragedian or comedian ; for the same ill-judged means may be practiced as much almost by the one as the other. In the green-room the jokes on this occasion are 'bringing them down ;' and 'we have been running our lengths.'

"Laughing on the stage at our own witticisms is another lamentable, not comical fault :—not that I would mean to be so rigid as not to allow for an accident, or once in a way, a well-timed joke, provided it suits time, place, and character. If the joke be ever so good, yet if the actor is performing as a Spaniard or a Frenchman, and reprobates either, all wit or sense is lost and the actor truly censurable."

As an illustration of the vice of such freedoms, he tells the following story, which is quite a little picture :—

"My engagement with Mossop having terminated, I intended soon leaving my old favorite spot, which was now become a home ; but was detained by Mrs. Abington's requesting I would stay and assist her in a scene of fun and humor for her benefit night, which she had complied with at the request of her really good benefactor Lord Miltown. Mrs. Abington had often entertained several genteel parties with some droll stories of a good gentlewoman she named Mrs. Fuz. I had been on parties with Lord Miltown and Lord Clanbrassil, when in high spirits and good-humor, and had diverted myself and the company with stories and anecdotes of my dear favorite old lady, Mrs. White, of whom the reader must by this time have formed some idea, by referring back to what I have before related of my darling old gentlewoman's singularities.

"Mrs. Abington had promised Lord Miltown she would produce herself as Mrs. Fuz, and she would prevail on her friend Wilkinson to do the same, as Mrs. Jenkins (alias Mrs. White); which information his Lordship made known to all the families of distinction in Dublin: but the peer did not reflect that those stories, told by myself or Mrs. Abington over the convivial table, gave a kind of explanatory key to the strange characters; and Sir Francis Delaval and Mr. Foote knew the mother and the daughters as well as myself; but on a stage, where few of the audience were acquainted either with the character that Mrs. Abington or I represented, the joke was as difficult to find out as Mr. Bayes' laughing violently at his own Prince Volscius, where the joke lay in the boots. Her play was 'Rule a Wife.' Between the play and farce, an interlude called Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Fuz. Mrs. Jenkins, Mr. Wilkinson; Mrs. Fuz, Mrs. Abington. Before the night came, we often entertained ourselves with extempore rehearsals, and conceived ourselves easy, perfect, and entertaining. Mrs. Jenkins was dressed before the play concluded. Mrs. Abington, after an epilogue of shrewd turn, and spoke with great point, retired to dress as Mrs. Fuz; our dress had been before well considered. It was a crowded house; part of the pit laid into the boxes. Mrs. Abington had ordered an excellent supper, superbly lighted, &c., and had wrote a little introductory dialogue-scene in the street between two gentlemen, giving a description of a party they were that night invited to, and where two extraordinary characters were asked for the entertainment of the lady's guests, at whose house the rendezvous was appointed; but each person was enjoined to lay their fingers on their lips, and not to laugh on any account whatever, but to pay every mark of attention and approbation, in order that the two ladies might with more unlimited freedom display their

different absurdities. After the dialogue was finished, the scene was drawn up, and discovered several well-dressed ladies and gentlemen at supper. Miss Ambrose was sitting at my elbow as the daughter of Mrs. Jenkins, who intended bringing her on the stage;—Mrs. Fuz was seated at one front corner of a long supper-table, and I was at the other: Mrs. Kelf was at the head as lady of the ceremonies, which was the only good part, for there were the servants with wine, and she displayed on the occasion her being mistress of a good knife and fork. On being discovered, and looking scornfully at each other, our two figures had for some time a fine effect; loud fits of laughter succeeded, and from these great expectations were formed.

"Mrs. Fuz then desired Mrs. Jenkins to begin—Mrs. Jenkins desired Mrs. Fuz would do the same—and we found ourselves in an awkward situation: but after a few efforts the two ladies entered into a hobbling short conversation, which was received very well, from the eager opinion that something better would follow, for the audience were all eyes and ears; but we soon flagged. Mrs. Fuz asked for a glass of wine—Mrs. Jenkins *upon* my *sould* and I will have a glass of *wind* too. [One of the expressions used in this scene, and omitted here on account of its coarseness, shows on what license the actors of the day could venture.] That did not do, and the Abington began to feel it a service of danger, perplexity, and disgrace. Mrs. Jenkins called to her daughter to act Juliet, and observe her manner, and to stick herself upon the stage as if she was chilled and stabbed *throfout:* but as she kneeled down to act Juliet, the strange old lady, Mrs. Fuz, got up, gave her a kick, ran away, and abandoned Mrs. Jenkins to the mercy of the audience; I was well aware of what might be expected, and therefore lost no time, but arose and ran after her, crying out, 'Mrs. Fuz! Mrs. Fuz!'

The audience began to smoke the joke, and by their tokens of anger gave the necessary hint to the staring ladies and gentlemen on the stage, that a retreat would not be imprudent if they regarded their safety; so they ran away also, which caused a laugh; for it was evident when Mrs. Abington and I had eloped, they were ignorant what to do, not knowing but that we meant to return, for they were only desired to stay on till we finished, which the performers could not conceive would be so abruptly as we made it, but expected us to come back and make a conclusion to our characters.

"I hope Mrs. Abington has not forgot this, but will laugh at it as I do; though it was truly awkward at the time, and it really drew Lord Miltown into disgrace, for he had said so much in favor of the promised scene, that it had been the conversation of the preceding week.

"When the curtain dropped, which was with loud marks of censure, the ladies universally arose, and, by way of joke, laughed and courtesied to each other, saying, 'Your servant, Mrs. Jenkins; your servant, Mrs. Fuz!'—which I dare say vexed his Lordship much, not only for his own and the disappointment of the audience, but more so, as any failure of Mrs. Abington's was mortifying to him; for he was then, and I am told is now, a most violently attached and true patron and well-wisher of hers."

By-and-by he grew weary of this life, and as we have seen became a country manager. There his character assumed a new shape, and as he got old he grew eccentric, and wrote other volumes that unfolded these fresh experiences. Every player of eminence could retail stories of "old Wilkinson's" singularities.

A young probationer, struggling on from one miserable barn to another, but who showed great promise, had written to offer his services to the York Theatre, and had but faint

hopes of even a reply. To his delight he received a favorable answer:—

"Hull, February 10th, 1798.

"Sir,—As a man in the mountains and not known on 'Change, added to y^r express desire of being here, convinces me you have misunderstood my meaning, for engaging you in June next. I shall want a comedian that can strike the audience well as to say, this will do, and *then* advance y^r situation; and as to coming into a first situation, and the business you wrote for, no such thing can be complied with. Mr. Emery is in full possession of fame and characters, so suit y^r convenience as to staying away. . . . but you will have full scope until the end of October, and then I can judge of continuance or raising of terms, according to y^r desert and success, for a good comedian only will do, if I can get him.

"Yours, &c.

"Tate Wilkinson.

"Open at York on Thursday next.

"Mr. ——— Mathews, Theatre, Carmarthen, Wales."

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"Sir,—Don't let either of us place too great a reliance. I will engage you at 1*l.* per week, until the first Saturday in June, 1799. But, to promise an increase of salary, and a certain line of business, where I have much at stake, would not be prudent on my part *to give*. Therefore, as to an additional salary, or a cast of parts—unseen, unknown—I cannot think of giving any such promise, as I must cast the parts as I judge. You may have great talents—moderate, or indifferent—all which must be judged by the manager and the public. Therefore, all the favor I have to ask is, whether you determine on being at York August the 18th.

Don't neglect your interest; but don't let me rely on your coming and then *not* make your appearance;—may be disagreeable not only at the time, but as to other engagements. Mr. Penson leaves me in August.

"I am, Sir, wishing you every success, yours, &c.

"TATE WILKINSON.

"If you possess near the merit you lead me to expect, you must not fear a good engagement *here*, *there*, or any *where*. You are sure I wish you to please. No managers part with favorite performers, but he must wish the new ones to succeed.

MATHEWS
MR. MOUNTAIN (erased), JUN.
MATHEWS'S,
MR. MOUNTAIN'S (erased), Bookseller,
No. 18, Strand,
London."

Here will be noticed a special eccentricity of the manager's, that of forgetting, compounding, or transforming proper names.

The young man found the company at Pontefract, and in some trepidation waited on the manager. "Come in!"—the visitor obeyed. "Tate was shuffling about the room with a small ivory-handled brush in one hand, and a silver buckle in the other, in pretended industry, whistling during his employment after the fashion of a groom whilst currying and rubbing down a horse. It appeared that it was his custom daily to polish his own buckles; for as these particular buckles were especial favorites, from having been the gift of his friend the immortal Garrick, and were worn constantly in his dress-shoes, he was chary of allowing others the privilege of touching them; in fact, he never trusted them out of his own hands. It was a minute

at least before Tate took the least notice of the newcomer, who, in the short interval had opportunity to observe the ludicrous effect of Tate's appearance, which was indeed irresistibly droll. He was still in his morning's dishabille, his coat-collar was thrown back upon his shoulders, and his Brown George on one side, exposing the ear on the other, and cocked up behind so as to leave the bare nape of his neck open to observation. His hat was put on *side* foremost, and as forward and awry as his wig; both were perked on his head very insecurely, as it seemed to the observer.

"Mr. Mathews, after an unsuccessful cough, and a few significant *hems*, which seemed to solicit welcome and attention, ventured at last upon an audible 'Good-morning, sir.' This had its effect, and the following colloquy ensued. 'Good-morning, sir,' said Mr. Mathews. 'Oh! good-morning, *Mr. Meadows*,' replied Tate, very doggedly. 'My name is *Mathews*, sir.' 'Ay, I know,' wheeling suddenly round, and looking at him for the first time with scrutinizing earnestness from head to foot. Winking his eyes and lifting his brows rapidly up and down, a habit with him when not pleased, he uttered a long-drawn 'Ugh!' and exclaimed, 'What a maypole! Sir, you're too *tall* for low comedy.' 'I'm sorry, sir,' said the poor disconcerted youth.

"'What's the use of being *sorry?* You speak too *quick*.' The accused anxiously assured him that he would endeavor to mend that habit. 'What,' said Tate, snappishly, 'by speaking *quicker*, I suppose.' Then, looking at Mr. Mathews, he, as if again in soliloquy, added, 'I never saw anybody so thin to be *alive!!* Why, sir, one hiss would blow you off the stage.' This remark sounding more like good-humor than anything he had uttered, the comedian ventured, with a faint smile, to observe that he *hoped he*

*should not get that one*—when Tate, with affected or real anger, replied, 'You'll get a great many, sir. Why, sir, *I've* been hissed—the great Mr. Garrick has been hissed; it's not very modest in *you* to expect to escape, Mr. Mountain.' '*Mathews*, sir,' interposed the miscalled. 'Well, Mathews *Mountain*.' 'No, sir—' 'Have you a quick study, Mr. Maddox?' asked Tate, interrupting him once more. Mathews gave up the ineffectual attempt to preserve his proper name, and replied at once to the last question, 'I *hope* so, sir.' 'Why' (in a voice of thunder) 'arn't you *sure?*' 'Ye-e-es, sir,' asserted his terrified and harassed victim. Tate shuffled up and down the room, whistling and brushing rapidly, looking from time to time with evident dissatisfaction, if not disgust, at the object of his scrutiny; and, after several of these furtive glances, he suddenly desisted from his occupation, and once more stopped abruptly before him.

"All this was inauspicious; and, after the interview had lasted a few minutes longer, Tate strongly recommended the young man's return to his father, and an 'honest trade,' as he said. All that could be gained by Mr. Mathews was the manager's slow leave to let him enter upon his probation and at least have a trial before condemnation."

Nothing, however, could remove the manager's prejudice, or better his opinion of the postulant, as will be seen from the following delightful and genuine communication:

"I am dangerously ill, therefore unable to attend to theatrical grievances. After a 2$^{d}$ and a 3$^{d}$ time seeing y$^{r}$ performance, I *aver'd* and *do aver* that *misfortune* has placed an insurmountable bar as to the possibility of y$^{r}$ *ever* being capable of sustaining the first line of comic business. Mr. Emery I requested to inform you of the same at Wakefield, who was entirely of my opinion. For the *paralytic* stroke,

so far from a comic effect, renders y^r^ performance *seriously disagreeable*. I told Mr. Hill that not all the Mirrors in the kingdom, in print or in glass, ever can establish you for a first comedian. If God wills it, it will be so, but no other order or interest can effect such a miracle. If you were to hear how you are spoken of (ask Mr. Jarman), you would not rely too much on y^r^ unbounded applause at Hull. If you think the company is in general approv'd, you are mistaken; am sorry to be told, quite the contrary. Y^r^ *Rundy* is very bad indeed; so is *Motley*. *Rundy* they have been used to see really well acted. . . . Do you think I engaged Mr. Hatton to hurt you? On my honor, *no*. If you say, why add to my expense? I answ^r^, *necessity*, and full conviction stared me in the face. Try by degrees to be useful, and by such means get into respect. Y^r^ worth as a man (as far as I know) I much esteem; but as a first-rate actor, you must try some more discerning leader, and officer some other troop. I think 'Feeble Old Men' is a cast you are most likely to be *useful* in. The pain I have suffered at my breast in scratching these lines is more piercing than what you feel at the loss of *Frank*. You have youth, sobriety, and assiduity, which sometimes does wonders. Wish Emery had been more open with you. I recommended the shop, as suited to you and Mrs. M.; but he said you were so stage-bitten it would only vex you. I can only say, Stay and be happy, or Go and be happy; and ever be happy; and wishing myself better, am y^rs^ in great pain.

"TATE WILKINSON."

His rambling style of talk was, however, his most amusing characteristic; the most heterogeneous subjects being jumbled together, so as to make the whole almost unintelligible. Mathews was fond of giving one of these mono-

logues, from actual recollection, and it was curious and fair retribution that the successful mimic should at last come to furnish profitable subject for mimicry of others.

His extraordinary habit of wandering in conversation, with at the same time the faculty he possessed of making, to a patient and experienced listener, his meaning finally understood, may be illustrated by a curious conversation which Mathews used to repeat with great effect. He was seated in his hall of audience in a great chair, in the same uncomfortable morning costume before described—wig awry, hat, &c. At his feet reclined a little spaniel puppy, an acquisition made on the road. On the table before him lay Murphy's Life of Garrick, recently published, a phial of cough drops, a spoon and a wine glass, &c.

*Enter Mr. Mathews.*—"Good-morning, sir; I'm glad to see you at home."

*Tate*, in a creaking tone. "Oh! good-morning! Sit down."

*Mathews.* "I hope, sir, you've enjoyed your trip, and are not suffering from your exertions?"

*Tate.* "Why, as for *that*,—not but I'm glad I went, for the weather was very fine; and, if it hadn't been for the firing of the pistols (which you know will never do for Mrs. Townend), I should have enjoyed it very much; but," he continued with gathering animation, "to be sure, Mrs. Siddons was all in all! *not but* I have a great disgust of women with blackened faces;—it's never a pleasing sight;—and the Obi women were hideous. But then her dignity was indeed wonderful! and if you ask me what is a queen, I should say, Mrs. Siddons! Still, to come into one's room when one's asleep, and run all over the bed and over one's face—ugh!—is more than any one would like, I imagine; and I have a particular horror of rats! At the same time, when they carry fire-arms about their

persons, and let them off close to your ear, all through a piece, it makes your head ache; and I've such a cough, that I can't get a moment's sleep when I'm upon my back; and—what with Murphy's Life of Garrick—I really have been a great sufferer all night. I've been recommended this bottle of drops to cure me, but I've been greatly disappointed in it. It's full of blunders and lies; shamefully incorrect. I took three drops upon a lump of sugar, and it made me very sick. *Not but*—Henry Johnston,—who, by-the-by, is a remarkably fine young man;—but he doesn't know what he writes about when he asserts that Garrick had never played before the King. Now, at the time 'The Chinese Festival' came out, Johnston surprised me very much with his strength; for, in the first place, he threw little *Lucky*" (meaning *Tucky*), "the black boy, over a high bank, and carried Mr. Orford, who performed *Captain Halpin*" (he meant to say, Mr. Halpin, who performed *Captain Orford*), "on his back into a cavern, lifting him up as easily as I lift this puppy, so you may suppose that he must be pretty strong; he's thorough-bred, and he'll let you hold him up by the tail without squeaking, as you see; but then, he's a fine pantomime actor, sir! Still, as I said to Mrs. Wilkinson, where is there to be found such another as Mrs. Siddons?"

The death of this worthy old actor and manager, which occurred in August, 1803, was thus described by one of his players:—

"The lamentable fact of which I have to inform you is no other than the departure of our dear and truly esteemed old Tate; who, on Thursday afternoon a little after four, was relieved from the pain he had of late so severely endured, to receive the reward of his integrity, generosity, and solid virtue of heart.

"But I shall not panegyrize a man whose good qualities

were fully known to yourself. He was completely worn out, and though he did not expire till the taper of life had long blinked in the socket, his reason and the ruling spring of all his actions, his generosity and honesty, strongly evinced themselves even to his last moments; and I fear his dissolution, though inevitably at hand, was somewhat hastened by an honest warfare in the cause of justice. Mr. Fawcett, who performed with us a week at Pontefract, previously to his coming hither, had stipulated by letter, that if the receipts at Pontefract should reach a certain sum, he should receive a compensation, but if not, he begged his services might be accepted for that week. The receipts were but poor, and of course nothing was offered Mr. Fawcett by our acting manager. On Wednesday night, Tate sent for Mr. Fawcett, and inquired of him if they had paid him for Pontefract. The reply was 'Lord bless you, as it was bad, I told you I should not take anything.' The old man, however, fell into a bitter passion, exclaiming, 'Not pay you! oh, if they don't pay you, they'll be robbers, cheats, plunderers; why should you not be paid?' Mrs. Wilkinson and John were accordingly summoned into his presence, and violently attacked. His passion was so extreme, that Fawcett left him in the midst of it: it continued, however, all night, and the next morning, Swalwell called Mr. Fawcett in, and insisted on his taking 25*l.* This, by-the-by, was the second agitation he underwent that night.

"The farce on Wednesday was 'The Wags of Windsor.' Tate made many anxious inquiries how Mr. Fawcett was received, as he said he had his doubts of the farce doing well, on account of the great popularity you had gained in it. He was of course pleased to hear it went off well. At the conclusion, Mr. William Wilkinson went in to him. An inquiry was made how he liked Mr. Fawcett. The answer

was evasive: 'Oh, I don't know, sir.' 'Don't know, sir! and why don't you know? how did you like Mr. Fawcett in the part?' 'Oh, sir, he was very well.' 'Why, what the devil do you mean by very well? Why don't you give me your opinion why he was only very well?' 'Why, sir, I hope I may be allowed to give my opinion; I have seen Mr. Mathews in the part, and I give the preference to him.' 'Ugh! here's a man! everybody tells me the farce has gone off with unbounded applause, and my son comes and says Mr. Fawcett was only very well.' This was the first violent fit he underwent that night.

"As the event of his death was made public directly, everybody heard it as they came from the race-ground. The poor old soul had some persuasion of his departure, and desired that the theatre might not be shut up that night, if he should die. We accordingly played to upwards of a hundred pounds, though a general gloom overspread us all. Yesterday's bills were prefaced as follows. 'York, 26th August, 1803. *In consequence of*' (a ridiculous expression, by-the-by) 'the death of Mr. Wilkinson, the trustees under his will most respectfully inform the public that they feel it to be their duty to continue the theatre open this evening, Saturday and Monday, when it will finally close until the winter season.'

"Of the purport of his will, I can only give you conjecture and report. They say that he has enjoined that none of the performers shall be discharged without a sufficient reason being apparent. But all this is only vague as to its authority. The old man is to be buried to-morrow morning at seven o'clock at the Pavement church. Mr. Swalwell asked Mr. John whether it was wished that the gentlemen of the theatre should attend. A negative was given, and an intimation that there would be only two coaches, one for the four trustees, and the other for the

three sons and Mr. Cummins. A general determination, however, prevails amongst us to see the last of our worthy old manager, every one being well convinced that 'we shall not look upon his like again.'"*

Such was the close of the long and chequered life of this excellent old player. His managerial career ended as honorably as it had been begun and supported, and there is a touch of pathos in his loyal consideration for his actors—his last wishes having a jealous regard to their interests. It is a pleasure to call attention to the merit of this obscure though worthy follower of the profession.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### GREAT DEBUTS. GARRICK—SIDDONS—KEAN.

THERE is, perhaps, no situation in life so entrancing as one of those rare first nights, when some genius has appeared and carried away the audience in a whirl of success. For the time, it seems almost a glimpse of the supernatural, and the fortunate few who have enjoyed this feeling may fairly look back to that night as one of delicious enchantment.

Associated with the London stage there would appear to be hardly more than three of these grand solemnities—of which one only was the triumph of an untried debutant. Garrick may be said to stand alone, as offering the single instance of immediate success. He had indeed made an experiment at Ipswich, but had appeared only a few times.

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* The above extracts are taken from Mrs. Mathews' memoirs of her husband.

It was at a sort of unlicensed theatre, whose rank was little above that of a music-hall of our day, that a young man, of short stature, whose name was suppressed, was announced as about to make his "first appearance on any stage." The night was that of the 19th October, 1741. The audience was gathered from the purlieus of the East End, with a sprinkling of private friends. The play was "Richard the Third."

"On that Monday night the performance began at six o'clock, with a few pieces of music. Then the curtain rose on 'The Life and Death of King Richard the Third,' and after the first scene, at that nervous moment, the new actor came from the wing. Macklin always talked fondly of this glorious night—the delight he felt, the amazing surprise and wonder at the daring novelty of the whole, and yet, at the same time, the universal conviction of the audience that it was right. It was recollected, however, that when the new player came upon the scene and saw the crowded house, he was disconcerted, and remained a few seconds without being able to go on. But he recovered himself. No wonder it surprised that audience—it was so new, and was all new. The surprising novelty was remarked, 'that he seemed to identify himself with the part.' They were amazed at his wonderful power of feature. The stupendous passions of *Richard* were seen in his face before he spoke, and outstripped his words. There was a perpetual change and vivacity. One effect at last overbore all hesitation, and the delighted audience found relief for their emotions in rapturous shouts of applause. It was when he flung away the Prayer-book, after dismissing the deputation—a simple and most natural action, yet marked with originality—and then the audience first seemed to discover this was true genius that was before them. When he came to the later defiant and martial

phase of the character, he took the audience with him in a tempest of enthusiasm. 'What do they in the North?' was given with such electric enthusiasm and savageness as to cause a thrill to flutter round the hearers: and when he came to the effective clap-trap, 'Off with his head!' his visible enjoyment of the incident was so marked that the audience burst into loud shouts of delight and approbation. What a night of delight to look back to!"

On the following morning he awoke and found himself famous. His reception, said the newspapers, "was one of the most extraordinary and great that ever was seen on such an occasion." An old gentleman of Lichfield—Mr. Swynfen—wrote down to Lichfield, to break the news to the family, in a characteristic letter. "*I was there*," he says, "and was witness to a most general applause he gained in the character; for I believe there was not one in the house who was not in raptures, and I heard several men of judgment declare it their opinion that nobody ever excelled him in that part." Mr. Pope—certainly a man of judgment—came to see him, and declared that nobody had ever equaled him, or would equal him. And for weeks afterwards the narrow streets of the obscure quarter were blocked up with the carriages of the nobility crowding to see him, and a dozen dukes were seen in the boxes of a night.

More interesting, however, is the story of that true heroine, Mrs. Siddons, who, passing the ordeal of a stroller's life, was admitted to the country theatres, and engaged by Mr. Garrick on the report of Parson Bate, specially sent down. The story of her failure at Drury Lane is well known; for which the jealousy of the established actresses, her own timidity and youth, with an injudicious selection of characters, were accountable. Discredited, and refused a re-engagement, as one not likely to

add to the credit of the house, she had to return to the country. "It was a stunning and cruel blow," she says, "overwhelming all my ambitions, and involving peril even to the subsistence of my helpless babes. *It was very near destroying me.* My blighted prospects, indeed, induced a state of mind that preyed upon my health, and for a year and a half I was supposed to be hastening to a decline. For the sake of my poor children, however, I roused myself to shake off this despondency." In short, she recommenced her country drudgery, and for several years labored hard, winning professional admiration and the esteem of friends.

At last, in 1782, came the longed-for opportunity, and she was engaged at Drury Lane. It was a terrible experiment, she felt, for a second failure could not be redeemed.

During the whole fortnight that she was in town preparing for the night she was almost in a nervous fever. "No wonder," she says, "for my own fate and that of my little family hung upon it. I had quitted Bath where all my efforts had been successful, and I feared lest a second failure in London might influence the public mind greatly to my prejudice, in the event of my return from Drury Lane, *disgraced as I had formerly been.*" Presently the rehearsals commenced. She herself gives a graphic picture of the days that intervened. "Who can imagine my terror?" she writes; "I feared to utter a sound above an audible whisper, but by degrees enthusiasm cheered me into a joyfulness of my fears, and I unconsciously threw out my voice, which failed not to be heard in the remotest part of the house, by a friend who kindly undertook to ascertain the happy circumstance. The countenances, no less than tears and flattering encouragements of my companions, emboldened me more and more, and the second rehearsal was even more affecting than the first. Mr. King, who was then

manager, was loud in his applause. This second rehearsal took place on the 8th of October, 1782, and on the evening of that day I was seized with a nervous hoarseness, which made me extremely wretched, for I dreaded being obliged to defer my appearance on the 10th, longing, as I most earnestly did, at least to know the worst. I went to bed therefore in a state of dreadful suspense. Awaking the next morning however, though out of restless, unrefreshing sleep, I found upon speaking to my husband that my voice was very much clearer. This of course was a great comfort to me, and moreover the sun, which had been completely obscured for many days, shone brightly through my curtains. I hailed it, though tearfully yet thankfully, as a happy omen, and even now I am not ashamed of this (as it may perhaps be called) childish superstition. On the morning of the 10th my voice was most happily perfectly restored, and again *the blessed sun shone brightly on me*. On this eventful day my father arrived to comfort me, and be a witness of my trial. He accompanied me to my dressing-room at the theatre. There he left me, and I, in one of what I call my desperate tranquillities which usually impress me under terrific circumstances, there completed my dress to the astonishment of my attendants without uttering one word, though often sighing most profoundly." The night arrived. Everything was favorable. There was a vast house, crammed to the roof, an extraordinary excitement and curiosity. The best actors remaining of the best school were to play with her—Smith, Palmer, Farren, and others. She had even the consoling support of old Roger Kemble, the old manager of strollers, who was utterly unnerved by the trial that was before his daughter. Her husband had not courage to be present, but wandered about the streets round the play-house. As she found herself on the stage she felt, she said, "the awful consciousness that one is the

sole object of attention to that immense space, lined as it were with human intellect from top to bottom and all around, it may be imagined but can never be described, and by me can never be forgotten!" She had no need to be apprehensive. It was one continued triumph. As the pathetic piece moved on there was that one centre figure taking enthralling possession of the audience. The tenderness and exquisite sweetness of her tones went to every heart, the agony of grief and suffering thrilled all present. At times she had all men's eyes suffused with tears, and many women in actual hysterics. Towards the last act there was scarcely a speech of hers but what was interrupted by tumultuous and passionate bursts of applause, until the whole house seemed swept away in transport. From that moment her success was assured in the most triumphant way. "I reached my own quiet fireside on retiring from the scene of reiterated shouts and plaudits. I was half dead, and my joy and thankfulness were of too solemn and overpowering a nature to admit of words or even tears. My father, my husband, and myself sat down to a frugal meat supper in a silence, uninterrupted except by exclamations of gladness from Mr. Siddons. My father enjoyed his refreshments, but occasionally stopped short, and laying down his knife and fork, lifting up his venerable face, and throwing back his silver hair, gave way to tears of happiness. We soon parted for the night, and I, worn out with continually broken rest and laborious exertion, after an hour's retrospection (who can conceive the intenseness of that reverie?), fell into a sweet and profound sleep, which lasted to the middle of the next day. I arose alert in mind and body."

Her calm, steady constancy may be contrasted with the desperate straits and tempestuous victory of Edmund Kean. The history of his miserable struggle—his privations, and

gallant confidence in himself all through—is familiar. One November night in the year 1814, he was playing at Dorchester. "When the curtain drew up," he says—and the reader will again note in how natural and effective a style most players relate their experiences—"I saw a wretched house: a few people in the pit and gallery, and *three persons in the boxes*, showed the quality of attraction we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting—he was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best. The strange man did not applaud, but his looks told me that he was pleased. After the play I went to my dressing-room under the stage, to change my dress for the savage"—Kankon, a character in a pantomime—"so that I could hear every word that was said overhead. I heard the gentleman of the stage-box ask Lee, who was the manager, the name of the performer who played Octavian. 'Oh,' answered Lee, 'his name is Kean—a wonderful clever fellow.' 'Indeed!' said the gentleman. 'He is certainly very clever, but he is very small.' 'His mind is large; no matter for his height,' said Lee. By this time I was dressed for the savage, and I therefore mounted the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my playing. 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'will you breakfast with me to-morrow? I shall be glad to have some conversation with you. My name is Arnold; I am the manager of Drury Lane Theatre.' I staggered as if I had been shot. My acting the savage was done for. I, however, stumbled through the part." On catching sight of his eldest child, who was suffering from water on the brain, he checked his delight; and he closes his narrative with the touching comment, "If Howard gets well, we shall all be happy yet."

Within a week the child died, and though the grand

dream of his life was about to be accomplished, this loss seemed to make him indifferent. "The joy I felt," he wrote to Drury Lane, "three days since at the flattering prospects of future prosperity is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child. Howard, sir, died on Monday morning last. . . . This heart-rending event must delay me longer in Dorchester than I intended. Immediately I reach London I will again, I hope with more fortitude, address you."

When he reached town his appearance, and some other reasons, discouraged the manager. He was treated coldly by actors at the single rehearsal which was hurried through on the morning of his performance. The stage-manager listened contemptuously to the new actor, and declared that "it wouldn't do." At the close all shrugged their shoulders, and announced that failure was certain.

"The rehearsal concluded," says Mr. Hawkins, his biographer, "Kean returned home to enjoy with his wife the unusual luxury of a dinner. He remained at home until six o'clock, when the striking of the church clocks warned him that it was time to depart. Snatching up a small bundle containing the few necessaries with which he was bound to provide himself, he kissed his wife and infant son, and hurriedly left the house. 'I wish,' he muttered, 'that I was going to be shot.' With his well-worn boots soaked with the thickly encumbered slush, he slunk in at the stage door as if desirous of escaping observation."

Everything was against him. The night, as the whole day had been, was wet and miserable. He paddled through the mud and slush, and arrived, wet through, at the theatre, where he silently crept to a dressing-room, of which he was allowed only a share; dressed himself, to the amusement and even contempt of his fellows, who noticed that he was putting on a black, instead of the traditional red

wig of Shylock. The stage-manager did not remonstrate —giving him up as hopeless. He hardly spoke to him.

Two good-natured actors—Oxberry and Bannister—alone gave him some encouragement; the former offered a glass of brandy and water. When dressed, he went to the wing, and saw an empty, cheerless house—in the pit, about fifty persons. Then the curtain rose. Soon the audience began to waken to enthusiasm, and by the end of the first act, there was an instinct behind the scenes that genius was present, and that a success was at hand. The players began to gather about him and congratulate, but he shrank from them with a look, and withdrew into concealment. From that moment the enthusiasm rose, the theatre began to echo with prolonged shouts. "What now," says Dr. Doran, in a spirited passage, "was the cry in the green-room?" The answer was that the presence and power of the genius were acknowledged with an enthusiasm that shook the very roof. "How the devil so few of them kicked up such a row," said Oxberry, "was something marvelous." As before, Kean remained reserved and solitary, but he was now sought after. Raymond, the acting manager, who had haughtily told him that his innovations would not do, came to offer him oranges. Arnold, the stage-manager, who had 'young man'd' him, came to present him—'Sir'—with some negus. Kean cared for nothing more now than his fourth act, and in that his triumph culminated. As he passed to the sorry and almost roofless dressing-room, Raymond saluted him with the confession that he had made a hit; Pope, more generous, avowed that he had saved the house from ruin."

"The pit rose at me!" was his own description. Trembling with agitation and excitement, he took off the Jew's dress and resumed his old, old threadbare suit, turned disdainfully from the genuine applause of his fellow-actors,

and left the house. Through the wet and slush he rushed home, flew upstairs, and clasped his wife in his arms. He poured out the story of his triumph. "Mary," he cried, "you shall ride in your carriage! And Charley, my boy," —and he turned to his infant—"you shall go to Eton!" Here his voice faltered, and he murmured the name of the child he had so recently lost.

There is nothing in the whole round of the plays so dramatic or so thrilling as this.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### "THE ILL-FATED MOSSOP."*

Among the actors with which the stage is crowded, a most interesting figure is that of Mossop, of whom perhaps little more is known, by the average light reader, than his name and rivalry with Garrick. His unfamiliar story must attract sympathy—such sympathy as is extended to the proud, rude nature that resents neglect, but disdains to complain. It is one of the most painful histories connected with the stage.

The success of Garrick, an officer's son, and the vast interest excited in the legitimate drama, seemed to draw a number of clever young men, of good birth and connections, to the stage. A long list in particular could be made out of the graduates and students of Trinity College, Dublin, who adopted the profession. Distinguished among these was Henry Mossop, the son of a clergyman, himself intended for the church, but who could not resist

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* Born 1729, died 1773.

the attraction of the "headlights," the now familiar footlights then not existing. He made his appearance in 1749, as Zanga, a "tearing" part full of rage and even ferocity, and became popular. In a short time later his reputation had got to London, and he was engaged at Drury Lane by Garrick, who cheerfully offered his stage even to such brethren as were likely to shine in his own line of character.

Here his powers excited admiration and ridicule. He was certainly what is called "a fine actor," conscientious, well studied, full of the character and profession, with an overweening sense of his own dignity and abilities, which yet could not be styled vanity. He had a splendid eye and a good figure, and in parts where fierce rage and blatant power were required, was excellent. But the critics soon began to find amusement in his regulated attitudes and stage "drill," to which he devoted unwearied pains, while his favorite position, known as the "handle and spout," one arm extended, the other bent and resting on his hip, was unsparingly ridiculed. Churchill gives this admirable picture of him:—

> "Mossop, attached to military plan,
> Still kept his eye fixed on his right-hand man.
> Whilst the mouth measures words with cunning skill,
> The right hand labors and the left lies still.
> With studied impropriety of speech
> He soars beyond the hackneyed critic's reach,
> *To epithets allots emphatic state,*
> *Whilst principals, ungraced, like lackeys wait.*
> In monosyllables his thunders roll,
> He, she, it, and we, ye, they, fright the soul."*

He was unsparing of his labors, and one of his characters was found written over with the most extraordinary

* This admirable sketch appeals to the ear as well as to the eye, and we can almost hear the stiff, rugged actor dwelling slowly on each pronoun.

elo utionary directions, such as "G tone, *with feeling, but low;*" "*Vast throbs of feeling*;" and the words "new device" are to be illustrated by "*face full to audience. Side look.* Cunning, fretful, and musing. *Smiling inward.*"

Enemies of Garrick, however, suggested to him that he was put in the background, that the manager was jealous of his talents, and purposely kept him out of the "lover" characters. His haughty, sensitive soul instantly saw a design, complete and insidious. Wretched scribes in the Press inflamed him by urging the same accusation. All the time he was figuring in Richards, Zangas, and other important parts. But he pressed for the lovers; the manager good-humoredly allowed him to make the experiment, which, as may be conceived, was a ludicrous failure, and which was naturally set down by the injured player to any cause but his own deficiencies.

"Mr. Mossop's departure," says his champion, Williams, "was partly occasioned by an affront he took from Mr. Garrick's appointing Mr. Mossop to act Richard, as we will suppose this night—and his first and best character, which stood well against Mr. Garrick's, though not so artfully and finely discriminated—and at the same time the manager secured a command from the Prince of Wales for the night following; so that when Mr. Mossop had finished Richard with remarkable credit in February, 1759, to his astonishment, the Mr. Palmer of that age stepped forward and said, 'To-morrow night, by command of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (his present Majesty), King Richard III.—King Richard by Mr. Garrick.' It gave a great damp to what Mr. Mossop had just finished; it certainly was galling, and proved duplicity and ill-nature, as well as envy."

In disgust he quitted the theatre, and in 1761 went to Dublin, where he determined to have a theatre of his own,

where he could play lovers and such characters as he pleased.

This opens a chapter in Irish stage history—the struggle of Barry and Woodward against Mossop at Smock Alley Theatre, a battle that divided the city into parties, and was fought out to the ruin of all the combatants. Two prodigal managers—Barry and Woodward—were reigning in partnership at Dublin, and fancied that the whole field was secure for themselves. "The consternation," writes Tate Wilkinson, "at the news was extreme. Mr. Barry was then as passionate an inamorata as ever youthful poet fancied when he loved, and would have thrown immediate bars to the engagement with Mrs. Abington, had not a sudden and important matter of astonishment at that time started up to the amazement of every faculty of eyes, ears, &c.; for Barry and Woodward, lulled in their long wished-for security, became the dupes of their own arts, and made the wandering prodigal (Woodward) begin seriously to reflect, and severely repent his foolish conduct in leaving his enviable situation in London, and above all the horror of losing what he had saved with so much care. This dreadful alarm was no less than the certainty of a report being confirmed as real, which at first they treated as unlikely, vague, and impossible; but it proved strictly true, that Mr. Mossop, from the encouragement and instigation of all his friends, and patronized by the Countess of Brandon, of powerful sway, with many leaders of fashion, had certainly taken Smock Alley Theatre on a long lease, purposing many expensive and gaudy alterations, &c., to oppose Crow Street, in the month of October the ensuing season. Barry and Woodward (to prevent, if possible, this dreadful undertaking) made him liberal offers; nay, even humbled themselves before him, to entreat Mossop to name his own terms. All this only

increased his pride, and he spurned at every kindness or emolument submitted to his acceptance and consideration. They even offered him one thousand pounds in English, and two benefits whenever he chose to take them; but all would not do, though they certainly would have been losers by his acceptance: but their situation was desperate; therefore all they could do was right, if by any means they could have effectually prevented such an opposition. Mossop's pride and obstinacy were, however, bent on monarchy, and so he was the cause of mutual ruin; but he at last suffered in a peculiar degree of punishment.

"He had saved a decent fortune, and by the absence of Barry, could have commanded a first station in London at either theatre, whenever he pleased or wished a change from Dublin; but his pride was predominant over reason, so he prostrated fame, fortune, health, and peace of mind headlong at the shrine of vanity, where sycophants hailed him with songs of triumph in full chorus, but his festal days were few and not to be envied."

A history of the Dublin stage would be a piquant contribution to dramatic annals. Mossop insolently declared that there should be but one theatre in Ireland, and that he should be the sole manager. No expense was spared. Each side had their patronesses, Mossop's being the Countess of Brandon, Miss Caulfield, sister to the Earl of Charlemont, and Lady Rachael Macdonald. He was a gentleman by birth and had aristocratic sympathies; but he was above all sense of pecuniary difficulty, being absorbed in the lofty sense of his own talent. Now he could appear as a lover. The pretty English opera of "The Maid of the Mill" was put in rehearsal, with good singers: though the performers were a little puzzled as to who was to play the tenor. Near the day of performance, however, it was announced "the part of Lord Aimwell (*without the songs!*) by Mr. Mossop."

Tate Wilkinson then gives this lively sketch of the state of things which presently followed:—

"This governor of restless players (Mossop) was not by any means blessed with a tithe of Mr. Barry's pleasing abilities as an actor, or generous qualities as a man or manager. Mr. Barry had certainly a most enchanting fascination beyond the general lot of mankind: as a proof, it was seldom either creditor or enemy left Barry in an ill-humor, however in other respects dissatisfied or disappointed. Mr. Mossop was overloaded with a quantity of combustibles, consisting of pride, insolence, arrogance, and gall.

"Early in March, 1762, both the tragedy candidates, Barry and Mossop, had fixed on performing Othello on the same Monday for their benefit play. Mossop relying on his novelty, Barry on his long-established reputation, the partisans prepared for the battle; bets ran high and furious, as in the present days for pugilism. Mossop's holder of the stakes was the Countess of Brandon, heavy in demeanor, but alert in apprehension. Her ladyship solicited his Grace the Duke of Northumberland to command Mossop's night, to which he generously assented; but wisely contrived to occasion a cessation of hostilities between the two combatants, by promising to Barry, that, provided he would postpone his night to the Tuesday, he would also command that evening's entertainment, by which means the town would be kept in good-humor, the particular friends of each rest satisfied, and, his Grace also added, he should (by such attention and compliance from Mr. Barry) not be deprived of the pleasure of seeing him in his favorite character of Othello, which always afforded him the highest satisfaction. Barry of course complied, and was not inwardly displeased that the critics (without a division) would have such an immediate opportunity to compare notes on the skill and

superiority of the declared opponents. On this remarkable occasion each house was equally thronged, though Barry's, on the Tuesday, was the greatest receipt, as Crow Street was capable of containing more than Smock Alley; otherwise party zeal, added to curiosity, raised auditors in such superabundance as would have filled Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres. As to victory, Barry's Othello was so meritorious as to make Mossop's viewed at a distance only; he was as much superior in the valiant Moor as Mossop would have been to Barry in Richard or Zanga. I sat, the evening of Mossop's benefit, in an upper box, where a lady who sat next me exclaimed on Mossop's first appearance, with an archness and humor peculiar to that nation, 'O! faith, Mossop has got two eyes in his chest!' This shrewd remark was occasioned by his wearing a heavy embossed shape (fit for Brutus or Cato), a dragon's face on the breast, with two large glaring red stones for the eyes; his face and wig being black, conveyed exactly what the lady had so ironically expressed. Mr. Barry, though masterly that night of controversy, had frequently shown himself to more advantage, merely owing to his then taking too great pains in his favorite and much esteemed part; which proves, that lucky accidents fortunately combined with nature will perchance strike out more beauties for an artist than all the most determined force of premeditation.

"Mr. Mossop that year had an Italian opera company, which was of infinite service to him, but astonishingly hurt his own consequence: for, what with parties and other diversions of routs, assemblies, concerts, &c. with which Dublin in the winter abounds, and opposed by the forces of Woodward and Barry (for they still maintained their fashion and good report), the great box nights were chiefly confined to those of the burlettas. That agreeable singer

and actress *Signora De Amici* was the principal, and was almost adored; she after that greatly succeeded at the opera house in London, as the first serious woman singer. These Italian comic operas were all the rage, and were supported at the following prices:—boxes, pit, and lettices, 5*s*. 5*d*.; middle gallery, 2*s*. 2*d*.; upper gallery, 1*s*. 1*d*. Dublin was then torn to pieces by the perpetual application for one theatre or the other; it was reduced quite to a party matter. The Countess of Brandon would not be seen at Crow Street upon any account, but attended constantly at her dear Mossop's. Barry, I believe, had at least converted the ladies two to one in his favor. Barry's making love, when on the stage, left tender impressions; but yet this play-begging at last grew troublesome, and ended with fatal circumstances, of which an exact account has before been given.

"Mossop, when he had a good house, instead of endeavoring to extricate himself in any degree from his multiplicity of difficulties, grew desperate, and instead of paying either his tradesman or performers, flew to the gay circles, where he was gladly admitted; and in order to mend his broken fortune by the chance of a die or the turn up of a card—of which I believe he was ignorant, and unacquainted with the necessary arts to succeed—he has often left the theatre with a hundred guineas in his pocket, and returned home with an aching head and heart; but his guineas, with debts of honor, were all left behind. The Countess of Brandon served him greatly, it is true; but often the money she occasioned being paid at the theatre returned to her own coffers. This was the universal opinion of Dublin, and is all I can allege in that case as to its authenticity; and, as to Mossop's poverty, there needs no evidence for that unfortunate reality. This conduct, and a train of evils attendant thereon, soon preyed upon his

health, involved his talents with himself, and gave bitter sours to that temper which was, in its natural source, far from being one of the best. An instance of the poverty his performers were reduced to in 1764 I will, with permission, relate.

"The 'Distressed Mother' was to be acted—Orestes Mr. Mossop; Andromache by Mrs. Burden (whom I have so often mentioned). The salaries had not been paid for several weeks, and she was in true character as the distressed *woman*. With infinite difficulty she forced access to the general—Mossop; for it was hard to accomplish admittance on account of many inconvenient reasons, unless on a Sunday, and on that grand levée day performers and tradesmen were too menial to be admitted. But with the force of a heroine, who dauntless surmounts all barriers and tyrants at will, so Mrs. Burden burst into the 'inmost recess of his prison house,' and when arrived at the royal hall, she was as determined to preserve character; for at the awful voice of Mossop she, Andromache-like, was prostrate at the feet of her royal master, and uttered forth in tragic tones, 'O! sir, for God's sake assist me, I have not bread to eat. I am actually starving, and shall be turned out into the streets.'

"*Mossop.* (*In state.*) Wo-man!—you have five pounds per week, wo-man!

"*Mrs. Burden.* True, sir: but I have been in Dublin six months, and in all that time have only received six pounds. I call every Saturday at the office for my salary —but no money, is the answer: besides, sir, your credit and your honor are at stake; how can I play Andromache, the Trojan Queen, without black satin shoes?

"*Mossop.* Woman, begone! I insist on your having black satin shoes for Androm-a-che. And, wo-man, if you *dare* ask me for money again, I will forfeit you ten pounds,

wo-man.—So ended that real tragical scene of penury and pomposity."

There were endless stories rife in the city of his straits and difficulties, the most ludicrous of which was that of the actor, who, supporting him in his (histrionic) agonies, threatened to let him fall unless he promised that his salary should be paid. As Mossop hesitated, the actor, grown desperate, was about carrying out his purpose when the other consented. Difficulties and miseries of all kinds began to overwhelm him, but there can be no doubt but that the patronesses—"The Right Honorable Rooks," as one account calls them—helped to pillage him. He plunged into law proceedings with his rivals, in which he spent some £2000, and had at last to barricade himself in his house against bailiffs. All this time, as may be seen from a letter in the Garrick Correspondence, he was indebted to his old enemy for money and many friendly acts of assistance, which he acknowledges. But the struggle could not be sustained; the town at last grew tired, declaring that no one cared "a toss up, whether Mossop kicked Barry, or Barry kicked Mossop," and at last, bankrupt in fortune, and to some extent in reputation, he fled from the scene of so much disaster.

After this came a speedy and mysterious descent. He found his way to London, where, humiliated, scornful, and prouder than ever, he disdained to ask an engagement from Garrick. The latter, whose theatre was well provided, was perhaps not very eager to secure so disagreeable and difficult an auxiliary, and not unnaturally, and in the absence of a formal application, affected not to know that Mr. Mossop desired to be engaged. Here was ground for a grievance, and though sensible friends begged of him to be rational and submit, he discovered that this was the old envy revived, and that Roscius was meanly jealous and

afraid. It must and should come from him. Garrick of course, when the matter was made a point of submission on his side, declined to move. Some low parasites that were about Mossop inflamed the brooding actor's rage; and one more clever than the rest, David Williams, published an offensive pamphlet asking "why Mr. Mossop was not engaged," and grossly taunting Garrick with his failing powers, the feebleness of his limbs, and his lack-lustre eye.

But there was a greater change noticed in his haughty enemy. He was seen moping in lowly places, emaciated, shrunk away to half his former size—his voice grown hoarse and almost inarticulate—and half starved. It was known indeed that he had no money and was well-nigh destitute. But when friendly voices asked how his health was, the proud tragedian answered "that he never was better:" and when friendly hands offered relief, he replied haughtily that he wanted nothing.

At last, in the year 1773, the following letter from a clergyman reached Mr. Garrick. It brought news of the wretched finale.

"I found him," wrote the gentleman, "preparing for death *with that extraordinary solemnity* which accompanied all his important actions. He had gone through the general forms of the church; but I believe only as religious and edifying forms, and unattended with any discourse on the state of his mind. His conversations with me were the most interesting that can well be conceived, and from the extreme dejection of my own mind, and the high and tragical tone in which he expressed himself, they made a dreadful impression on me. His religion was tinctured by the characters he had studied, and many of the attributes of God were the qualities of a Zanga or a Bajazet. Among other things which gave him uneasiness, and made him

greatly apprehend the displeasure of that God before whom he was going to appear, his behavior to you was not the least distressing. He accused himself severely of having attributed motives of conduct to you which he firmly believed you to be incapable of. He saw that he had been deceived by an excessive pride; and lamented the injustice he had done you not only in some pecuniary articles, but in giving ill impressions of your character to his acquaintance. The very night in which he died he renewed this conversation. He often cried out, 'O my dear friend! how mean and little does Mr. Garrick's present behavior make me appear in your eyes, to whom I have given so different an idea of him! Great God, forgive me! Witness, my dear William, that I die not only in charity with him, but that I honor him as a great and virtuous man. God Almighty bless and prosper him forever!"

Garrick wrote back:—"I thank you for your most affecting letter. Your account of poor Mossop's death distressed me greatly. I have been often told that his friends never spoke kindly of me, and I am now at a loss what behavior of mine, from the first moment I knew him till the time of his death, could have given him that unkind and, I hope, unmerited turn of mind against me. Had I known his distress, I should most certainly have relieved it, he was too great a credit to our profession not to have done all in our power to have made him easy if not happy."

This was the end of the ill-fated player, who expired in a mean lodging at Chelsea. Fourpence was all the money found, and the disgrace of a funeral at the expense of the parish seemed imminent. Mr. Garrick wished to save the remains of his old comrade from such an indignity; but a man of fashion, and Bencher of one of the Inns of Court, interposed. This gentleman, who had taken no notice of

his unhappy nephew in his misery, now felt that the respectability of the family was in question, and defrayed the expenses of a moderate funeral.

Such is the story of the unfortunate tragedian—the proud "*high breathing Mr. Mossop*"—as Tate Wilkinson happily describes him. It makes what is perhaps the most touching episode in the annals of the stage.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### LOVE AND DEATH UPON THE STAGE.

The instances of the elevation of actresses from the stage to be peeresses and ladies of title, are pretty well known, and have added to the dignity of the stage. Beyond the fact of the marriages themselves, which were in the nature of a surprise, there was not much romance involved, and indeed some of these episodes, such as that of Miss Farren, ended in prosy fashion by separation or divorce. The Duchesses of Bolton and St. Albans, the Countesses of Derby, Essex, Brunton, Harrington, Lady Becher, make up the brilliant histrionic roll. To this category, too, belongs the well-known story of O'Brien, the handsome actor, with Lord Ilchester's daughter, Lady Sara Strangways, which has been told and retold. For the present, therefore, this ground need not be gone over again.

But there are some episodes of less pretensions, though of more exciting character; stories of passionate love and death—more bound up with the stage and more fruitful of interest.

## I.

### THE HANDSOME CONWAY.

In the year 1810 the Dublin stage sustained the loss of a graceful actor named Holman, and then arrived, to supply his place, a young tragedian named William Augustus Conway, who was six feet two inches high, and reputed, as well he might be, the tallest actor on the stage. It was a phenomenon to see this giant play Hamlet, and such characters, but he gradually made his way and became exceedingly popular. He was born in 1789, and had been sent out to Barbadoes, but had returned when eighteen years old, and had gone on the stage. For some years he held this high position until his reputation was made, and he attracted the managers of Covent Garden. He was engaged there in 1813, as second to Kemble, beside whom he could make little impression, and soon sank into obscurity. Presently came Miss O'Neill, and the tall tragedian was selected as *jeune premier*, or "lover," to play with her in all the pieces with which she was captivating the town. This contrast, however, did not add to his reputation, and the critics were fond of discovering deficiencies in the *ensemble*, which they maintained might be supplied by an actor more suited to her talents and style than Mr. Conway. Even with this chance offered, which would have inspired an actor of less capability than Mr. Conway, he could make no advance. The reason was no doubt that failing which often so mysteriously hinders the progress of an otherwise good actor or actress—an inability to excite the sympathy of the audience, whom indeed they rouse in quite an opposite direction. At this moment there are artists on the stage, capable, laborious, cultivated, who with every exertion can excite only what Lamb calls "imperfect sympathy,"

which is but one remove from antipathy. A player infinitely their inferior utters some small phrase in a true and tender modulation, and the whole house appreciates. The cause is no doubt a certain over-consciousness and innate affectation, such as makes bashful people hard and forward. Mr. Conway was besides a good-looking actor, and was supposed to be followed by a crowd of female admirers. This too always helps to raise a barrier between the player and his audience: the former, flattered by "the trunkful of letters" which the handsome actor always is ready to boast of, indemnifies himself by this feminine admiration for neglect upon the stage. The next step is to disdain the applause which he cannot procure, and a certain conceit and affected superiority.

Some feeling of this sort was no doubt the cause of Mr. Conway's failure. Off the stage, he received homage enough to turn his head: while the ladies at least admired him in gallant parts, such as Falconbridge and Romeo. Donaldson the actor, however, declares that, apart from physical attractions, he was excellent in these characters. The story went that "a duke's daughter" had nearly lost her wits through the fascination of this captivating player.*

Miss O'Neil, however, passed away; and presently came the great Kean, and the handsome William Augustus Conway was quite extinguished. The truth was he was stung by the perpetual ridicule and banter showered on him by the Press, especially by the personalities of "The Mirror," which had selected him and Elliston as special butts. This journal, which was directed by the eccentric Hill, pro-

* This is recorded in a characteristic sentence in the "Recollections of an Actor" (Walter Donaldson). "His power over the female heart is well known: and *what it must have been may be surmised* when the daughter of a duke went about raving mad for this Apollo of an actor."

nounced that he had a "bad voice, which was elevated into a monotonous roar, and descended to a whisper;" that his countenance during the whole performance offered one unvaried gloomy frown, that recalled "Huntley" in a circus melodrama. These criticisms grew more and more offensive. "Mr. Conway," it was stated, "must always be tracing a circle with one leg while the other acts the part of a pivot: when he stoops to lift the child, he stretches his limbs *with the air of a lusus naturæ engaged for exhibition*, and clasps his hands to the measure of one—two—three, and a hop." This style of criticism, steadily pursued through a course of years, at last drove him from the London stage to the provincial theatres.

Coming to Bath, he was destined to find himself the hero of a grotesque adventure which offered a curious contrast to his previous *bonnes fortunes*.

There a supremely foolish old lady—who was some seventy-three years old—fell violently in love with him, and at the close of her days capped all the follies of her life. This was the famous Mrs. Piozzi, *née* Salusbury, late widow of Thrale, and still later the infatuated adorer and wife of a singer and singing master. Mr. Hayward, in his entertaining memoirs of this lady, has seriously attempted to vindicate her character; yet the fact remains that during the lifetime of her first husband, she was a light, frivolous creature, though lively enough: that she broke with the truest and noblest of characters, Johnson, because he remonstrated too warmly with her, for what seemed to him an unbecoming marriage; and that she vindicated his opinion of her judgment and conduct by offering marriage, when seventy-three years old, to an actor who might have been her grandson! This well-born lady of old ancestry and good estate, who first selected a brewer, then a singer, and finally a third-rate actor—the two latter for

their personal charms—and who, at the same time, had experiences of the best society in London, where she might have found the superior attractions of wit and refinement, must have had singular tastes. The tendency of the mind that is cultivated is to rise and not to sink.

Infatuation is indeed the name for this new passion, if we may judge by the letters of one whom it is scarcely irreverence to call a very silly old lady. They are indeed a testimony to the sagacity of Samuel Johnson, now long in his grave, and whose unsparing severity on the eve of her second marriage they more than justify. She was not old enough to have this set to the account of age; for during many years she was to be accounted the most amazingly intelligent and vivacious old lady ever known. This pitiable story adds yet another instance of that compromising delusion, to which the most eminent seem to be the victims.*

In the month of September, 1819, she thus commences her amatory strains:—

"Three Sundays have now elapsed since James brought me dearest Mr. Conway's promise to write to me the very next, and were it not for the newspaper which came on Tuesday the 24th August—sending me to rest comfortable, though sick enough, and under the influence of laudanum—I should relapse into my former state of agonizing apprehension on your account; but that little darling autograph round the paper was written so steady, and so completely in the old way, whenever I look at it my spirits revive, and hope (true pulse of life) ceases to intermit, for awhile at least, and bids me be assured we shall soon meet again. I

* Of the genuineness of the following extracts there can be no question. Their authenticity is proved in a manner quite convincing; but their style is even a better proof. The letters were found at New York.

really was very ill three or four days; but the jury of matrons who sat on my complaint acquitted the apricots which I accused, and said they (all but two) proved an *alibi*. Some of the servants, who were ill too, found out that we had, in Bessy's absence, got some mildewed tea that lay in a damp closet at the last lodging. We are now removed to a palace, a Weston palazzino, where we propose receiving Mr. Conway."

She could be very graphic and amusing, this old lady; and one of the most curious features in her letters is a sort of badinage, assumed with great art, when she found herself growing too ardent, and which seemed to plead delicately that she was privileged, and only half in earnest. That stroke of the "jury of matrons" is comic; and she rather indiscreetly alludes to "a superannuated beauty fifteen or twenty years younger than myself, but sick and dropsical; her legs hanging over her shoes." This, too, is artfully put, as who should say, "Good care and preservation do not depend on age; for here is a professed beauty far younger, and not nearly so well preserved."

The young actor, however, flagged occasionally in his devotion; was often ill, and did not write; and she would appeal to him pathetically:—

"I feel much more immediately and sincerely interested in our own meeting after such cruel illness and dangers, and a silence that has shaken my courage more than all the savage shoutings of this new-fangled reformation. Good-night; and God bless my valued friend, for whose perfect recovery and long-continued happiness I will pray till the post comes in. Yes; and till life goes *out* from poor H. L. P. I would keep up my spirits—as you wish me—and your spirits too. But how can I? Send a newspaper at least. O, for a breath of intelligence, however short, respecting health and engagements!"

She did not, however, omit appeals of a substantial shape:—

"I wrote to find Mr. Davie Robinson, Villiers Street, in the Strand, and bade him, when he sent my stock of wine to Bath, put half a dozen bottles of the very same in a basket and deliver to Mrs. Rudd, 41 Gerrard Street, Soho."

The basket unfortunately miscarried. Still "I wish my beloved friend to keep his spirits up, but have enough to do on his dear account to keep up my own. Yet shall not the one alleviating drop of comfort, as you kindly call my letters, ever fail. Mrs. Stratton saw the horrid paragraph inserted in the *Courier*—she writes with all possible tenderness, and, I really do believe, true concern. Mr. Bunn's elegant expressions of friendship pleased me too." Elegant expressions of friendship! Here we enter on the sentimental strain; and indeed love-making or love-writing, at this epoch, seems to have followed the model of Yorick and Eliza:

"Here am I, however, praying most fervently for your restoration to all that makes life desirable, and giving God thanks for the power He lends me of affording solace to the finest soul, the fairest emanation of its celestial origin that ever was inclosed in human clay. Such clay! But we must all be contented to bear our cross. The paschal lamb—type of our blessed Saviour—was ordered to be eaten," &c.

This, too, is another expedient with elderly lovers—to blend religion with their affection; and as we have seen, the artful Yorick become paternal and highly clerical in his exhortations, but Mrs. Piozzi verges on the profane. As Christmas draws on she touches a congenial string:

"Accept, dearest Mr. Conway, *of a real Christmas pie:* it will be such a nice thing for you when, coming late home, there is no time for a better supper; but Bessy begs you

will not try to eat the crust; it will keep for weeks this weather. The fleece should be a golden one, had I the magic powers of Medea; but I do think I was baby enough to be ashamed last night of owning I had not three pounds in the house, except your money, laid by for my benefit-ticket, which shall be replaced before that day comes."

But he got to Bath at last, and the following agitated letter must have made the invalid smile: "Half-dead Bessy —more concerned at what I feel for you than what she feels for herself—brings this note. Mrs. Pennington left me in real affliction; and if she found no billet at the Elephant and Castle directed to her from Kingsmead, will carry home a half-broken heart. Let my maid see you, for mercy's sake. 'Lord, ma'am,' said she, 'why if Mr. Conway was at Birmingham, you would send me; and now he is only three streets off.'" (Artful maid! Here also following the immemorial precedents; aged spinsters and widows, from Mrs. Wadman downwards, always accepting such comfort from their familiars.) "Go I WILL," adds Mrs. Piozzi, in large capitals; "if I die upon the road, rather than see you swallowing down agony, and saying nothing but how well you are to everybody, when I know you are wretched beyond telling!" Instead of Bessy, James goes; and Mr. Conway was implored to let him at "least see and speak to you." Motives of delicacy would of course account for the substitution.

Here, in another letter, it seems as if Mr. Sterne himself was beginning:—

"I would not hurry you for the world. Take your own time, and do it your own way; or rather suffer nature to do it—that has done so much for you; more, I do think, than for any mortal man. See what a scar the surgeon, however skillful, would have made in that beautiful neck; while nature's preparation, through previous agony, made

suppurating ease come on unfelt; and the wound heals almost without a cicatrix, does it not? So will it be with the mind. My own hasty folly and my 'violent love outran the pauser Reason.' Whilst I am advising my beloved patient, however, to turn the torrent of his fancy toward the past occurrences of human life, the dear pathetic letter now in my bosom forced me on the same method this forenoon, when my heart really sunk at the thought of such coarse conduct."

This high-flown style is delicious; and "*suppurating ease*" is true medical sentiment. Mr. Conway had been contemned by a young lady to whom he had paid attention, on the ground of his inferior station and birth. His patroness and admirer is furious, and refurbishes some of those old weapons with which she had defended her Piozzi. His family was superior to hers, "*des deux côtés, je sais ce que je dis.*" She went to a party, and the image of the Adonis thus attends her:—

"Who, I wonder, was that tall man I met at my last party? his aspect shocked and haunted me like a spectre, so apparently majestic in misfortune. The master of the house was pointing me out to him, as if to win his attention; but no look, no smile ensued. He was not like you, except his lofty carriage. Yet I kept on thinking, so will my Conway stand when next I see him. It was an odd feel; and your distress presented itself so forcibly to my imagination at the moment, that my mind instinctively understood—all was indeed over."

All this is incoherent and strange. Again the maid comes on the scene: "Bessy cries; but begs me not to lose my life between my scorn of your tormentors, and tenderness for your health."

But it is not uncharitable to suppose that Bessy was looking for a substantial legacy. The old lady was presently

suffering all the torments of jealousy; and certainly it is pitiable, if not laughable, to see the condition of the poor dame descending even to the meanness of depreciating a rival.

Mrs. Piozzi writes with delight how she treated this family, who had dared to trifle with her Conway. It was probably the old story—a young girl flattered at the attentions of a handsome young fellow unsuitable in station, and the object of her civility interpreting it as serious encouragement.

"Now, however, I rise to say how the evening at Eckersall's passed off. Mrs. Stratton and her eldest granddaughter came early; so I returned their salutation much as usual—only refusing the hands I could not touch—and talked with Mr. Fuller about ancient Thebes, its hundred gates, &c. The young lady's airy manner—such as you describe rightly, contrasting with your own cruel situation—quite shocked me. No crying, no cast-down looks, no whimpering, as last year—changeful as the weather or the wind, she seems at perfect ease. Mrs. Stratton not so. Waddling up to me in the course of the night, she said she wanted to talk with me. 'Impossible!' was the reply. 'My life is spent in such a crowd of late.'—'But on a particular subject, Mrs. Piozzi.'—'Lord, ma'am, who can talk on particular subjects in an assembly-room? and the King ill beside!' So there it ended; and for me there it shall end."

Mr. Conway could not have been in the least obliged to her for this championship. No doubt he would have been eager to know what Mrs. Stratton had to say. Her being "quite shocked" at the young lady's airy manner is true old woman's spite. But presently she cannot contain her spite and jealousy:—

"'Tis not a year and a quarter since dear Conway, accepting of my portrait sent to Birmingham, said to the

bringer, 'O, if your lady but retains her friendship—O, if I can but keep her patronage—I care not for the rest.' And now, when that friendship follows you through sickness and through sorrow—now that her patronage is daily rising in importance—upon a lock of hair given or refused by *une petite traîtresse* hangs all the happiness of my once high-spirited and high-blooded friend. Let it not be so. EXALT THY LOVE, DEJECTED HEART, and rise superior to such narrow minds. Do not, however, fancy she will ever be punished in the way you mention: no, no; she'll wither on the thorny stem, dropping the faded and ungathered leaves; a china rose, of no good scent or flavor, false in apparent sweetness, deceitful when depended on—unlike the flower produced in colder climates, which is sought for in old age, preserved *even after death* a lasting and an elegant perfume—a medicine too, for those whose shattered nerves require *astringent remedies!*"

Then she entered on a religious homily. It was preaching, she owned, but still it came from "a heart, as Mrs. Lee says, twenty-six years old, and, as H. L. P. feels it to be, all your own." She would "die to serve him;" and sends a bottle of wine, also a partridge. "The Courtenays all inquired for my Conway; all who seek favor of me ask for you; all but —." Which aposiopesis, of course, is for the benefit of the little *traîtresse*. Her indefatigable arts in trying to propitiate him show ingenuity. She, as it were, flies up and down, driving a nail here, a nail there, into the coffin of his affection for her rival. Yet it is easy to see her uneasiness, as the ungrateful thought must have flashed across her at times, that she was *too old* for these dalliances. Her impulse then was to stifle any such association in his mind by the judicious offering of wine, of a partridge, or, more frequently still, by taking and disposing of *tickets* for his benefit. The mixture of flattery—the

wish to make herself of importance, and, at the same time give *him* the idea that his merits alone were the cause of the sale of the tickets—this little contention of motives can be read plainly in the following: "I was happy to see my dear friend's handwriting, as soon as I came home, and the tickets. I must certainly have another box secured in my name, if you have no objection. You see by the inclosed how they will insist on coming to what they call my places. My Welsh friends, however, have more wit. Mr. and Mrs. Lutwyche gave me two bank-notes for two tickets, and they must have front seats in the next *loge* to where I sit myself."

It would almost seem that he was disappointed at her so cavalierly refusing to listen to what the mother of his beloved had to say, for the conversation came off later. Some of the passages are worth noting as touches of human character.

This was at the end of February, 1820, and this is the last of these curious letters.

It was rumored in Flintshire, Mr. Hayward says, that she proposed marriage to him, and that she offered Sir T. Salusbury a large sum for the family seat in Wales, which she wished to settle on the actor. This Mr. Hayward dismisses as a mere rumor, not worthy of any serious consideration. It is admitted, however, that Conway showed the late Mr. Mathews a letter from Mrs. Piozzi, offering marriage.* But such proof is hardly needed—any one who follows the details of her infatuation for Conway, will see that her inflammable nature could not resist the passion which had taken possession of her.

Within a month of her last letter, in May, 1821, this strange old lady died, aged eighty-two years. The young

* See the "New Monthly Magazine," April, 1861.

actor pursued his stage career. It is not mentioned whether he "took," as the phrase runs, anything under her will. He certainly might have had reasonable expectations, even as compensation for the ridicule he must have endured in Bath circles. He pursued his theatrical course, but seems to have failed everywhere, or to have left an impression of what was neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, and which is about as bad as failure. Disgusted at this indifference, he went to America, and completed his series of failures out there. Too sensitive to laugh at newspaper squibs and critics, or even to learn the art of appearing indifferent, he sank into despondency, and became "serious." This again developed into a morbid dejection. On a voyage from New York to Charleston it was noticed how silent and dejected he was, and how, though the weather was raw, he persisted in wearing only the lightest summer apparel. On the 24th of January, 1828, when the passengers were going down to dinner, he told the captain "he should never want dinner more," and presently flung himself overboard. The body was never recovered. His effects were sold, and among them were the curious letters which may have excited the amusement and pity of the reader.*

## II.

### LA BELLE MISS HENRIETTE.

In the year 1818, a tall handsome girl, announced as Miss Smithson, made her appearance in London, and was received with some favor. Her talents were considered not very striking, but she had a correct style, and showed evidences of study. She was indeed no more than a third-

* They are published in a little pamphlet by Mr. J. Russell Smith, of Soho.

rate actress, and her name is now scarcely familiar to any but the professed students of stage chronicles. She came from Ireland, where she had been carefully educated under the patronage of ladies of rank who took an interest in her. If the stage as a profession has been disparaged it is certainly the fault of its members; for society, even of the highest and most refined order, has always been ready to open its ranks to actresses who have made a reputation for *genuine* acting. There is even an anxiety to cultivate the acquaintance of legitimate performers, and a long list, from Mrs. Siddons at the beginning of the century, to Mrs. Scott Siddons in our day, could be made out in support of this statement. It is only when the stage is perverted to purposes of *exhibition*, as in the case of burlesque pieces of a vulgar order, that an exclusion is deservedly maintained. Miss Smithson soon, as the stage chronicles are careful to tell us, found a friendly patroness in Lady Castlecoote; and further, whenever she had a benefit "the names of Mrs. Coutts, Lady and Sir Charles Doyle, and the Countess of Belmore regularly appeared in her books." Miss Smithson, therefore, might have perhaps been recollected as a correct, well-trained, interesting actress, esteemed by her audiences, as well as by a circle of distinguished friends and patrons. Most of these would have been surprised to hear that she was destined to be the heroine of a French melodramatic romance.

In the summer of the year 1827, Laurent, an old clerk of the Galignanis, who had turned manager, and, from long training in the well-known library at the Rue Vivienne, had acquired a good knowledge of English and English manners, conceived the idea of bringing an English company to Paris. He was liberal in his offers, and determined to engage only good artists. He secured Abbott, a pleasant comedian, as stage manager and actor; Liston, Charles Kemble, and

Miss Smithson; with some others. He offered twenty-four napoleons a week to the leading performers, and paid the expenses to and from Paris of the whole party.

There happened to be a gentle fit of Anglomania abroad, one of those attacks which agitate the emotional French: and this was in favor of the English company. Otherwise it may be said, without contradiction, that the English drama is on the whole unintelligible to the French. Of the better-known Shakespeare plays, such as "Othello" and "Hamlet," the story is familiar, and they are able to follow a good actor with some general perception of what he is about. Rage and jealousy is recognizable in all countries and all languages. Again, this performance was on the eve of the great romantic revival, and the young man Alexander Dumas, who was to be one of its apostles, was, as he tells us in his diverting memoirs, an assiduous visitor to the Favart Hall, where the performances were given. He was enchanted with the English plays and players; and confesses, which is a good deal from a Frenchman, that they had a vast influence on his own genius.

The series opened with a performance of the "Rivals," in which Liston, as Acres, produced not the slightest effect. Not a smile was seen on the faces of the audience. The disgusted low-comedian, who at home could produce a roar by a single glance of his droll eye, refused to appear again, and went home denouncing the Frenchmen as "a set of jackasses." This was an inauspicious commencement. Sheridan's "School for Scandal" was later tried, but received with perfect gravity. The most amusing incident occurred at a later period, when Macready was engaged to perform Othello. This he did with such effect, that when the curtain fell, some forty or fifty of the audience leaped upon the stage and insisted on overwhelming the tragedian with their embraces. In their enthusiasm, they forgot the

artificial character of the Moor's swarthiness, and many of the gentlemen showed on their faces tokens of the honor they had enjoyed.

It was then thought that tragedy would be more effective, and Miss Smithson came forward in the agonizing character of Jane Shore. To the surprise of all at home, the chord was touched, the fair Smithson was discovered to be handsome and interesting—to have an exquisitely touching voice—to be full of fire and real tragic feeling. The Parisians began to rave of "la Smithson," or "Smeet sown," as it no doubt became in their mouths, and the piece was performed five and twenty nights. In the various French memoirs and criticisms we come on allusions to this actress, who is spoken of with praises that we should have thought suited only to the talents of an O'Neill or a Jordan. In the Drury Lane green-room, where she had held rank as a decent "walking lady," there was much wonder at this success. In Paris, the Royal Family used to attend, and the Duke of Berry, who had picked up some English in exile, and could use English hunting oaths with good effect, was often found behind the scenes. But it was not in this august circle that her chief admirer was to be found.

A young medical student of ardent spirit, with a passionate love for music, chanced to witness one of her performances, and was captivated by the "belle Henriette Smithson," who had played Ophelia. This was the young Berlioz, a wild and irregular genius, whose essays are as characteristic as his music. His love became a frantic passion. Already a composer, he found himself compelled to express his ardor in symphoniac "Deaths of Ophelia," and other Shakesperian subjects. His soul was possessed by the one subject, and could not find rest. Betimes he would fly from Paris to the country, and after wandering

about all day and walking miles, would hurry back in the evening to the theatre to witness the performances of his idol. His longing desire was to attract her notice: for up to this time he was but one of the indistinct atoms of an audience, and might have attended for weeks without his face ever attracting observation. In his desperation he contrived, though without money, to get up a concert for the performance of his works. But a disastrous failure was the only result, and his strange style seemed opposed to all canons of good music. Following the precedent of many an enamored apprentice or draper's assistant, he began to address letters to the object of his adoration, but these were of so frantic and extravagant a description that Miss Smithson strictly enjoined her maid to take in no more from that source. This mortifying rebuff, as may be imagined, did not cure him. By superhuman exertions he arranged a second concert, and contrived that it should be given at the very theatre where Miss Smithson was playing. Their names actually appeared in the same bill—his for the morning, hers for the evening performance; this did honor to the perseverance of the love-sick youth. But it was only an apparent *rapprochement*. The concert succeeded, but Ophelia, it would seem, was not present, and was ignorant whether it succeeded or failed. The following morning he saw her get into her traveling carriage and set off for England. Thus did the romance appear likely to end.

Distracted at this loss, he was thinking of some desperate step, when an ingenious friend furnished the strangest remedy ever dreamed of in the vagaries of the gentle passion. This gentleman, who was a German pianist, drew his attention to a young actress of the Boulevards, who was the image of the absent Smithson. The idea was seized on by the deserted swain, who accepted this new object as a sort of image or deputy, and transferred his

passion and attentions to her. The actress returned his affection. The lover presently obtained the "prize of Rome" at the Conservatoire, and had to set out for that city to pursue his studies. While there news reached him of the marriage of his deputy flame. In a new paroxysm of despair, he fell into fresh extravagance, and set off for France furnished with *three* pistols—for the husband, the faithless actress, and himself. At Genoa he took a last look at a "*Fantastic Symphony*" which he had composed, and dissolved into tears as he thought of the works of which he might be depriving the world. This produced a gentle reaction, but a sudden paroxysm caused him to fling himself into the sea, from whence he was rescued with infinite difficulty. All this might seem incredible but for the well-known and recorded extravagance of other Frenchmen under the influence of a passion which, in their country, cannot be called "the gentle" one. His letter to Victor Hugo detailing his rescue has been preserved,* and supports this account of the transaction. The "ducking," as it would be called in prose, seems to have restored him to his senses. He complains of having been "hooked like a salmon," spread for a quarter of an hour for dead in the sun, after which he had "violent vomitings for a whole hour." Calmer thoughts succeeded, and he resolved that he would live for the sake of his two sisters and for art. So he returned to Rome to finish his studies.

Two years later he was in Paris again, bringing with him the "Fantastic Symphony" which had been inspired by the enchanting Smithson. He chose his rooms exactly opposite those which *she* had occupied. He made some inquiries. Joy and rapture! she was actually in Paris, now manageress of a theatre and about to resume her perform-

* "Les Contemporains," article "Berlioz," p. 45.

ances! He determined to resume his old passion—and could do so under favorable auspices. He was now an artist. He resolved to try his fortune once more—with a concert. A friend engaged to bring her, and he had the exquisite satisfaction of seeing her seated among the audience. The "Fantastic Symphony" of this fantastic being, with all its groans and cries, and ejaculations of love, rage, and despair, produced the effect. We are told that the young actress seemed to perceive that she was the source that inspired these strange sounds. She was seen to weep; and the next day graciously consented that the eccentric young composer, who wooed in so strange a fashion, should be introduced. He almost at once proposed marriage.

Some serious difficulties, however, interposed. Her parents naturally objected to an alliance which was so unsuitable in every way. So wild and almost childish a lover would be likely to prove an undesirable husband for a decorous and well brought-up English girl. She too had her troubles. The speculation she had embarked in was a foolish one. Almost the first night she learned how temporary had been her attraction: and the fickle Frenchmen did not now care to go and look at *la belle Henriette*. The poor actress had to sink all her savings in this project—and in a short time, was compelled to withdraw from the undertaking. She became *bankrupt*, and was left without a shilling.

The young composer, however, to his credit, prosecuted his suit. The fair Henriette at last consented, and in the year 1833 they were married. But disaster seemed to pursue them: for only a few days after the ceremony she fell and broke her leg. It was found, too, that the heroine had brought him some heavy debts as her portion. But he behaved with gallantry and devotion, worked hard, gave concerts and lessons, and succeeded, by paying the

creditors a little, in inducing them to wait. Meanwhile his reputation began to spread; but with that reputation came violent prejudices, which operated on his character and made him fierce and combative—ferocious in his animosities—and excited hosts of enemies. The story of his musical life is well known to musicians and literary men, and has little to do with the present episode.

It is awkward to have to tell that the result of this romantic and stormy courtship was unsatisfactory. The French writers say that the *ménage* was an unhappy one, all owing to "la belle Smithson" whom he had so loved. She did not make him happy. Possessed by the demon of Jealousy, she disturbed the peace of the household, so that living together became impossible. In other words, the impulsive husband was liable at any moment to become the victim of some new passion which his English wife did not perhaps tolerate; the hero of the three pistols, the drowning, &c., was most likely to be the disturber of the peace of the household.

But in the year 1851, when she was seized with an attack of paralysis, it is recorded that nothing could exceed the devotion and attention of her husband. The same year she died, and thus ended a very curious and little known episode connected with a romance of the stage.

## III.

### "LOVE AND MADNESS."

A notorious and disagreeable character that figured in the fast life of the last century was the Earl of Sandwich. His private character was of the most abandoned sort. In his public capacity he was highly unpopular; the nickname of "Jemmy Twitcher" showed in what contempt he was

held. His curious "shambling" walk was always being ridiculed; even the poor old king, when his wits had gone beyond recall, was heard to repeat with a kind of imbecile chuckle the name of "Jemmy Twitcher." The most odious feature in his career was his hypocritical disloyalty to Wilkes, with whom he had shared in many an orgy, but whose indecorums he stood up to reprobate in the House of Lords—being shocked by his outrages against public morality.

About the year 1762 this exemplary character, when making some purchases in a milliner's shop close to Covent Garden, was attracted by a very handsome girl who was serving behind the counter. This was a Miss Ray, a common laborer's daughter who had found her way to London from Elstree, and had been apprenticed to a mantle maker at Clerkenwell. From a picture of her by Dance, her beauty would seem to have been a little exaggerated, and there was more an expression of interest than of beauty. This accords with her character, which was retiring and amiable. Within a short time the milliner's apprentice had left the shop, and had entered upon a regular course of accomplishments, which was pursued for some two years, at the expense of her noble patron. It was discovered that she had a fine voice, and one of "Jemmy Twitcher's" redeeming points being a passion for music, she soon began to display her talent in a remarkable fashion, and became a singer of merit.

She was now installed at Hinchinbroke, Lord Sandwich's seat, where the lady of the house had to submit, with as good a grace as she could, to what was at the time a not unfashionable species of affront. It was, however, in some sense varnished over by the prosecution of musical entertainments, oratorios, &c., in which the intruding lady took her part, and indeed made an awkward position as

little offensive as possible. For many years this relation continued. Miss Ray's musical reputation increased. The noble amateur was fond of giving entertainments, to which all the persons of fashion and position were eager to be invited, and where Miss Ray always took the part of leading soprano. She received lessons from Giardini, then a singer of eminence, and also from Mr. Bates. Lord Sandwich's concerts at Hinchinbroke show indeed that amateur music was then more advanced than would at present be supposed. The oratorio of 'Jephthah' was a favorite piece. The Duke of Manchester's military band made part of the orchestra. Mr. Bates led, while the noble host, as Mr. Cradock, a frequent guest, comically describes it, "took the kettle drums, to *animate the whole*." The 'Non Nobis' was sung during dinner, and sometimes a glee. Miss Ray, it was admitted, was the chief attraction, and even the ladies were pleased to remark how little "she assumed" upon her situation. Lady Blake indeed was so far carried away by her interest as "to advance between the parts" (it is the fussy Mr. Cradock who tells us), and address some compliments to the fair soprano. It was noticed, however, that the retiring Miss Ray was really embarrassed at this attention. She wished for no recognition beyond a musical one, and the host was heard to remark to a friend that he wished a hint could be given to the lady of rank who had paid the attention; "for," he added, "there is a boundary line in my family which I should not wish to see exceeded. This sort of thing might upset all our pleasant music meetings." However, when the Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. Green) was also impelled to go up to compliment her on her singing of "Brighter Scenes," or of 'Shepherds, I have lost my love," or when Mrs. Hinchcliffe, a bishop's lady, protested "feelingly," "I declare I am quite ashamed to sit opposite to her and take no notice, she is so modest and

unassuming!" it showed that Lady Blake's indiscretion had been rather severely dealt with, and that "our pleasant music meetings" could not have been in any serious danger of being overset. A censorious public was, however, a little sarcastic on this toleration by bishops, and some indifferent verses were written on the subject:—

"When nobles and bishops and squires are so silly
To attend the levée of Miss Ray and of Billy,
When to show most respect for the lord of the place is,
By listening to fiddlers—and praising his mistress.
If this be the case, and you do not dissemble,
The cause do you ask? To be sure it is Handel;
There's a lord beats a drum, not yet by it disgraced,
Since a bishop, perchance, by Giardini is placed;
So the high and the low are all jumbled together
In order that Jephthah may go off the better."

A letter of hers which has been preserved shows that the education which her protector was said to have secured for her, was not of a very high order:—

"June 27, 1774.

"Yesterday was favored with yours, which found me very unwell indeed, but I myself sent the score of Jephthah directly to Miss Davis. It would have given me great pleasure to have heard Miss Davis; and I am very much obliged to you for all your polite attention to me. My opinion is that every person will be pleased and delighted with her. Though I cannot be present at your most respectable meeting, which I hope will be very full; you will have my best wishes; and that you may continue well yourself. Should you have any other commands pray let me know them, and they shall be readily obeyed."

Some years passed by, when Mr. Cradock—who was a sort of amateur littérateur, and assiduously strove to secure a portion of the spare moments of men like Goldsmith,

Johnson, Garrick, and others—was asked to vote for a candidate professor at Cambridge, a great friend of Lord Sandwich's, and on his return was pressed to stay at Hinchinbroke. As he and his host were entering the house they met a couple of officers, who had come to call; one of whom was Major Reynolds an acquaintance of Lord Sandwich, the other a Captain of the 68th Foot, who was recruiting at Huntingdon. The Major was asked to dine, and then begged to be allowed to introduce his friend Captain Hackman,—who was also invited to stay.

They had a small party at dinner—the two officers, Lord Sandwich, Mr. Cradock, and Miss Ray, who came down attended by a lady friend. After dinner there was a rubber of whist. Captain Hackman from the first moment was quite fascinated by Miss Ray. He did not join in the game, but "requested leave to look over the cards." Lord Sandwich "retired early." The lady was indeed now titular mistress of the mansion, and, it may be presumed, had by this time driven out the rightful hostess. This little entertainment was to prove the beginning of one of the most painful tragedies of the time.

The officer had commenced life by being articled to a merchant, but soon exchanged this profession for the army. For the next three weeks after the dinner he was hanging about Hinchinbroke; he used to meet Miss Ray on her rides about the place, and being good looking believed that he had recommended himself to her good graces. He felt, however, that he had nothing to offer in exchange for her present situation; he was very poor, and his brother-in-law, Booth, was a humble tradesman in Cheapside. She was mother of a family, and had no inclination for following about a marching regiment. In this state of affairs he obtained an introduction to the Commander-in-chief in Ireland, and set off for that country, in the hope of ob-

taining some military preferment there. In this he failed, and the infatuated man, who had been a merchant's clerk and a soldier, now once more changed his profession, took orders, and became the Rev. Mr. Hackman and Curate of Wyveston in Norfolk.

This, however, did not advance his suit, though he was more pressing than ever in his attentions. Miss Ray's situation now became embarrassing. It was thought she returned the affection of her admirer, and was eager to settle down respectably. Lord Sandwich was advanced in life. The customary "settlement," the object of a prudent ambition with ladies in her situation, had not been made; and her children were not provided for. Her musical gifts, too, had so developed, that she was looking to an engagement at the opera, where an actual offer of £3000 and a free benefit had been made to her. On the other hand, she felt the weight of her obligations to one who for seventeen years had been her friend and protector. Comparing her, indeed, with other ladies of her condition, she might be considered comparatively respectable, and perhaps more a victim than a sinner. She at last seems to have found the almost frantic advances of the Rev. Mr. Hackman too embarrassing, and amounting to an annoyance. She was anxious to check his importunities, to be rid of so dangerous a suitor, and at last refused to see him. Meanwhile Lord Sandwich was becoming highly unpopular; offensive ballads were sung under the Admiralty windows: and in a riot which arose owing to the Keppel acquittal, she and Lord Sandwich had to escape in the night from the Admiralty, and were in much alarm from mob violence. The unfortunate woman was indeed prepared for the catastrophe that was presently to follow, by presages in the shape of alarms, jealousies, indecision, and anxiety. A friend or companion was living with her,

imposed on her, it was later stated, as a sort of duenna, by Lord Sandwich.

The Rev. Mr. Hackman was in town, and living in Craven Street. He at last began to be persuaded that she had finally withdrawn her affections from him, and grew almost desperate. It was now April 17, 1779, and he had discovered that she was to go out for the evening. He tried to find out where she was going, but she refused to tell him. This filled the measure, and led him to resolve on his final purpose. He stationed himself in a coffee house at Charing Cross to watch, and saw her carriage go by into the Strand; he followed and tracked her to Covent Garden Theatre: where, with her friend Signora Galli, the singer, she occupied a conspicuous position in a front box. The opera was "Love in a Village."

All through the night Mr. Hackman was flitting restlessly about the house, now in the galleries, now in the lobbies, frantically watching, and now retiring to the Bedford Coffee House to drink brandy and water. He saw a great deal that must have inflamed his fury; the "three gentlemen, all connected with the Admiralty, who came and occasionally paid their compliments to them." Mr. Macnamara, an Irish Templar, had also paid his respects to the ladies, and Miss Ray had been seen to "coquet with him." The opera came to a conclusion; the lobbies filled, and the Piazza echoed with the voices of chairmen and link boys calling for coaches.

Miss Ray's carriage was waiting, and she herself was coming out. Mr. Macnamara, the Irish Templar, was at hand, and observing that she was somewhat crushed in the crowd, made his way to her and gave her his arm. The agonized clergyman had seen all her gayety—her coquetry with the Templar, and her carelessness as to *his* absence. He had pistols in his pocket, but had certainly come out

that night with no design against her. His purpose was to wait for her at the theatre door, shoot himself, and fall a bloody corpse at her feet. The spectacle of all that enjoyment, her smiles to the dashing Templar who was conducting her out, filled him with a sort of frenzy. The unfortunate lady had her foot on the step of the carriage, when a man pulled her gown; as she turned round, she felt a pistol touch her forehead. Another second and it was discharged, and the Templar saw her clap her hand to her forehead—an amazing exertion, for the skull was later found to be divided into halves by the shot. The next moment the man had fired at his own head and was stretched on the ground. The unhappy lady had sunk down bathed in her blood, with which the Templar, as he attempted to raise her, found himself covered. The scene may be imagined—at once horrible and picturesque; the flaring torches—the ladies in their dresses and ornaments—the shouts for help—the wretched victim in her finery, "Signora Galli" bending over her and no doubt in hysterics—and the murderer on the flags, frantically beating his own head with the butt end of his pistol, and shrieking "Kill me! kill me!" for the ball had only grazed the skull. "Thus," says the customary notice of the day, "terminated the existence of the beautiful, the favored, and yet the unfortunate Miss Ray. . . . There was scarcely any polite art in which she was not an adept, or any part of *female literature* (*?*) with which she was not conversant." Her conversation offered an "unparalleled delicacy which characterized her through life. In short," goes on the obituary notice in a delicious passage, "we may pronounce Miss Ray to have been a very amiable and valuable character; *for the susceptible, even among the most chaste,* will scarce think one frailty an adequate counterpoise to so many good qualities: but, by placing that single frailty to nature and

her sex, must join in the general pity for so worthy and accomplished a woman."

The body of "the lovely victim" was carried across the street to the Shakspeare Coffee House, where also the murderer was conveyed. An express was sent off to the Admiralty to Lord Sandwich, who was expecting her home to supper at half-past ten. As she did not arrive, he grew tired, and after waiting an hour, went to bed. He was roused up at midnight by his black servant, who came with the news. He was quite stupefied and overwhelmed by the shock—or as the fashionable newspapers of the day expressed it more appropriately, "his Lordship fell into the most lamentable agonies, and expressed a sorrow that did infinite honor to his feelings: *indeed, what feelings must that man have who would not be agonized at such a spectacle!*" The latter portion of the sentence, it will be seen, almost annuls the compliment in the first.

Hackman's wound was dressed, and his pockets were searched. There were found two letters, one addressed to Miss Ray, containing a last passionate appeal, and fresh protestations of his attachment—which showed that he had not made up his mind until perhaps he had reached the theatre, to take any violent step. The second letter was to his brother-in-law, Mr. Booth, in which he set out his resolution to destroy himself, and the cause. He could not live, he said, without Miss Ray. And since he saw that he was now excluded from the house, and that she persistently refused to see him, he had determined to destroy himself. He was besides overwhelmed with debt. He did not care to live, and wished his brother all the felicity that he himself dared not to hope for. It was inferred from these letters that he only intended to kill himself, and that he was driven by a sudden and uncontrollable fit of fury to kill her. Beauclerk, discussing this

point with Johnson, urged that the two pistols were intended for himself alone—one being kept in reserve in case the first missed fire or merely wounded. The probability, indeed, is that he left his house with the intention of taking his own life; and that what he had seen at the theatre and at the end of the performance, had suddenly determined him to add the other crime to the first. This seems to have been the view of Justice Blackstone at the trial.

When Hackman was at the Shakspeare, he was asked by the Templar, the question that seems to be always rather indiscreetly put on such occasions, "Why he had done such a bloody deed?" and answered calmly that this was not the place for such questions. He then earnestly desired to see his victim, supposing that she was still alive, and being told that she was dead, begged that her poor remains might not be exposed to the view of the curious. Sir John Fielding, the blind magistrate, arrived, at five in the morning, and finding that his wounds were not serious, made out his committal to the Bridewell. He was at once carried to the prison; and when he arrived there he broke out into frantic protestations of his attachment, and talked of his victim with all the extravagance of the maddest love.

That day the news was all over the town. Parson Warner, perhaps the most disreputable member of his cloth in his day, was dining at "Harry Hoare's" with a jovial party, where all the talk was about Miss Ray. Knowing his friend George Selwyn's indecent curiosity or craze about such matters, he called at the tavern where the remains of the unfortunate lady were laid out waiting the inquest, and did his best to get in and have a view of them; so as to send a full account of the morbid spectacle. But he had no interest, he said, with the doorkeepers—and

money was refused. The newspapers, later affected to joke on Mr. Selwyn's interest in these matters, and declared that he was detected sitting at the head of the corpse, disguised in a mourning cloak. On the fourteenth day she was taken down to Elstree and interred in a vault there. Her father, to whom she had always allowed a small pension, was still alive. Lord Sandwich retired to the country, and indeed altogether from society. When he emerged, however, not being able to resist his favorite music, performers would awkwardly select airs in which the deceased singer used to distinguish herself, such as "Shepherds, I have lost my love!" and though "Mr. Bates" saw the unfortunate character of the melody, it was too late to rectify the mistake, and his Lordship was seen to retire from the party in great distress.

The trial came on. The prisoner was determined to plead guilty, but at the last moment was prevailed on, perhaps by the entreaties of his sister, to enter the usual plea. The case was of course proved conclusively. He made a rather pathetic defense. He said he had no wish to live. "I stand here the most wretched of human beings, and confess myself criminal in a high degree: yet while I acknowledge with shame and repentance that my determination against my own life was formed and complete, I protest with that regard to truth which becomes my situation that the will to destroy her who was dearer to me than life was never mine till a momentary frenzy overpowered me, and induced me to commit the deed I deplore. I have no wish to avoid the punishment which the laws of my country appoint for my crime; but being already too unhappy to feel a punishment in death or a satisfaction in life, I submit myself with penitence and patience to the disposal and judgment of Almighty God." This was of course a prepared appeal, and has rather an artificial tone. On the

other hand, a person in such a situation may not be able to trust to a natural eloquence, and though the words may have been conned by rote, the sentiment might be perfectly genuine. He received sentence with calm composure, and Lady Upper Ossory was able to write for the satisfaction of her friend Selwyn, who was still greedy of particulars, "that Mr. Hackman's behavior *was glorious yesterday!*" This is good evidence of the "toadyism" with which the opulent bachelor was gratified, ladies of rank and condition being thus eager to cater for his unseemly mania.

Lord Carlisle, who specially attended the execution in order to furnish particulars to his friend Mr. Boswell, was even more fortunate, and was privileged with a seat in the mourning coach opposite the prisoner. "I am this moment returned from it," wrote the Earl. "Everybody inquired after you, you have friends everywhere. The poor man behaved with great fortitude: no appearances of fear were to be perceived, but many evident signs of contrition and repentance. He was long at his prayers, and when he flung down his handkerchief for a signal for the cart to move on, Jack Ketch, instead of instantly whipping on his horses, jumped on the other side of him to snatch up the handkerchief, lest he should lose his rights, and then returned to the head of the cart; then, with the gesture so faithfully represented by your friend Lord Wentworth, *Jehu'd him out of the world.*" It seems amazing that so indecent a tone should have prevailed among men of education; it seems to have been part of a system, as Mr. Storer, another man of pleasure of the time, specially attended Dr. Dodd's execution, and wrote a lively account of the proceedings, also for the entertainment of his friend Mr. George Selwyn.

Thus ended this tragical history.

## IV.

### DEATH AT THE FOOTLIGHTS.

As death "visits with equal impartiality the palace of the rich and the hovel of the poor," it is scarcely to be expected that he would stay his hand during the glittering reign of stage delusion. Considering that this covers a period equal to nearly a fifth part of the day, and that in a great city like London so many thousands are concerned in the business,—that the conditions of performing imply labor and much excitement of the nerves and heart, while the heated atmosphere, glaring lights, &c., are scarcely favorable to health, it might be expected that theatrical life would exhibit a more than average death rate. Still, when we think that in spite of the numbers who night after night make up the audiences, how rare is an instance of sudden death, we might be almost tempted to assume that within those charmed portals life was tolerably secure, and that there death was no more a reality than the mimic dissolution witnessed on the stage. It would be scarcely fanciful to ascribe this immunity to a sense of absorbed interest—the grateful occupation of the mind, which suspends, as it were, the advance of decay, or illness; though no doubt many instances could be produced of sudden seizure or death after returning from the theatre. It is certainly pleasant to think that those skillful and hardworking entertainers whose life is devoted to the duty of increasing "the public stock of harmless amusement" should for the most part have found their occupation healthful, and in many instances have reached to an honorable old age. There can be no doubt that "legitimate" histrionic gifts, no matter how laboriously exercised, are favorable to length of life,

and that the stage is about as healthful a profession as that of the lawyer.

Many actors have been seized with mortal illness either on the stage or shortly after leaving it, and have survived but a short time. But the instances of death while actually on the stage are very few indeed. The "leading case" is of course that of Palmer,—"Jack Palmer," as he was familiarly styled,—one of the most airy and animated comedians of the English stage—the original Joseph Surface—for whom the part, it is said, was written; and whose naturally insincere character furnished the author with a good many artful touches. His acting too helped Lamb to illustrate his favorite theory, that comedy should be pitched in a key somewhat above the tones of ordinary life—and should not be an accurate reproduction of the manners and the humors of the day. Author and actor, it seemed to him, should pierce to the motives and universal principles of human nature, of which such surface manifestations are merely results—whereas the average realist is no more than a laborious, unintelligent copyist. This passage in the Elia Essays unquestionably contains the true principle of Comedy acting and Comedy writing, and accounts for the failure of so many intelligent writers of our time.

Kotzebue's lugubrious play of "The Stranger," after furnishing occasion for another great "creation" to Kemble, had found its way to the provinces, and, in the year 1798, was being acted at Liverpool. Palmer was engaged, and with some inappropriateness had taken the part of the misanthropical hero. Still a comedian of genius might give a very satisfactory interpretation of a tragical character, though an eminent tragedian would scarcely be at home in the comedian's part. In August the theatrical world was shocked with the following account of his sudden death on the stage, which went the round of the papers:—

"DEATH OF JOHN PALMER.

"On the morning of the day on which he was to have performed 'The Stranger,' he received for the first time the distressing intelligence of the death of his second son, a youth in whom his tenderest hopes were centred, and whose amiable manners had brought into action the tenderest affections of a parent. The play, in consequence of this, was deferred; and, during the interval, he had in vain endeavored to calm the agitation of his mind. The success with which he performed the part called for a second representation, in which he fell a sacrifice to the poignancy of his own feelings, and when the audience were doomed to witness a catastrophe which was truly melancholy.

"In the fourth act, Baron Steinfort obtains an interview with the Stranger, whom he discovers to be his old friend. He prevails on him to relate the cause of his seclusion from the world: in this relation the feelings of Mr. Palmer were visibly much agitated, and at the moment he mentioned his wife and children, having uttered (as in the character), '*there is another and a better world!*' he fell lifeless on the stage. The audience supposed for the moment that his fall was nothing more than a studied addition to the part; but on seeing him carried off in deadly stiffness, the utmost astonishment and terror became depicted in every countenance. Hamerton, Callan, and Mara were the persons who conveyed the lifeless corpse from the stage into the green-room. Medical assistance was immediately procured; his veins were opened, but they yielded not a single drop of blood, and every other means of resuscitation were had recourse to without effect.

"The gentlemen of the faculty, finding every endeavor ineffectual, formally announced his death; the surgical operations upon the body continued about an hour; after which,

all hopes of recovery having vanished, he was carried home to his lodgings on a bier, where a regular inventory was taken of his property. Mr. Aickin, the manager, came on the stage to announce the melancholy event to the audience, but was so completely overcome with grief as to be incapable of uttering a sentence, and was at length forced to retire without being able to make himself understood: he was bathed in tears, and, for the moment, sunk under the generous feelings of his manly nature. Incledon then came forward, and mustered sufficient resolution to communicate the dreadful circumstance. The house was instantly evacuated in mournful silence, and the people, forming themselves into parties, contemplated the fatal occurrence in the open square till a late hour next morning. Doctors Mitchell and Corry gave it as their opinion that he certainly died of a broken heart, in consequence of the family afflictions which he had lately experienced."

This incident was shocking enough, but what peculiarly affected the public mind was the strange coincidence of its occurring after the utterance of the words "there is another and a better world." The party of the community who regarded the stage as a nursery of all that was sinful and demoralizing, seized the occasion to point a moral; and were not slow to see in this visitation something of a judgment. It was thought that the actor who would talk with histrionic levity of that "other and better world" to which his profession could not lead him, was appropriately chastised at such a moment,—and that his fate was a warning. This view was urged in pamphlets and from the pulpit; and owing to these exertions the story has become firmly established as a melancholy tradition of the stage.

Much of this dramatic element vanishes when it is ascertained that the event took place at another passage of the piece. The words "another and a better world" occur

in the second act; the unfortunate actor had reached the fourth act, and was speaking about the children to Whitfield, who played Baron Steinfort. When he came to the words "I left them at a small town hard by," the memory of his own loss no doubt rushed upon him,—and after some vain attempts to articulate the words, he fell lifeless on the stage. After all, there is something more pathetic in this version.

Mr. Cummins, who, as we have seen, was one of Tate Wilkinson's leading actors, and supposed at York "to read Shakespeare better than any man in England" (and in the provinces performers thus gifted are almost as numerous as that commonly met animal "the best horse in the kingdom"), has been already sketched. Indeed he was considered at York to excel even Barry in sweetness of voice, but, encouraged by the applause of that town, he grew to roar and rant, so that when Kemble came to display his own more regular talents, he was told candidly by the gallery that "he cud na *shoot* oot laik Coomens." In virtue of his popularity he retained all the round of youthful characters, though of good age and great bulk. On the evening of June 20th, 1817, he was playing in "Jane Shore" at the Leeds Theatre, and in the last scene was uttering the well-known speech—

> "Be witness for me, ye celestial hosts,
> Such mercy, and such pardon, as my soul
> Accords to thee, and begs of Heaven to show thee,
> May such befall me, at my latest hour"—

when he suddenly tottered, sank down and expired. The audience assumed this to be part of the piece, and applauded heartily. Perhaps the poor player's suffering at that moment lent a realism to the performance to which in all his career he had never yet reached. When the news became

known the deepest sympathy was felt, and the whole town thrown into commotion. This instance would have been yet more favorable to the theory of "a judgment" put forward by the "saints," and have pointed a moral more effectively than the case of Palmer.

An actor named Bond was, in 1735, playing the old man Lusignan, and while sitting in an arm-chair, had fervently uttered the blessing on his children, set down in his part. When Zara came to reply she found that he had expired in his chair.

Peterson's end had nearly the same appropriateness as Cummins's. In October, 1758, when he was playing the Duke in "Measure for Measure," with Moody, he came to the words—

> "Reason thus with life:
> If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
> That none but fools would keep;
> a breath thou art ——"

when he fell into Moody's arms and shortly after expired. He must have been a pleasant creature, to judge by the solitary recorded instance of his humor, which perhaps his sudden end caused to be remembered. He was pressing a brother actor for the repayment of a sum of two shillings, now long due: "Let a fellow alone," was the reply, "I am sure to pay you in some shape or other." Peterson answered good-humoredly, "I shall be obliged to you to let it be as much *like two shillings as you can.*"

His friends placed on his tomb-stone, in St. Edmund's Bury, the last words he uttered.

The latest instance of all is the recent one of Mr. Jordans, a respectable, painstaking actor, who, a few months ago, was struck down when upon the stage.

Seizure by apoplexy or other illness on the stage, shortly followed by death—as in the cases of Peg Woffington,

Farren, Harley, Fulham at Dublin in the year 1826, scarcely fall within this category. The players were advanced in life, and the stage was scarcely connected with the attacks.

"The last night," says the quaint Wilkinson, "Frodsham ever spoke on the stage was in October, 1768. After playing Lord Townly, and though in apparent great spirits, he died within three days after:—

"'Ladies and gentlemen, on Monday evening "Coriolanus." To which will be added' (looking seriously, and laying his hand on his heart)

'What we must all come to!'

which expression will serve as a pause to my imperfections and digressions, and afford my reader a leisure for five minutes' reflection."

Several more instances could no doubt be quoted, but these will be found sufficiently typical.*

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* The reader may be referred, for some curious details of the life behind the curtain, to a series of interesting papers that have lately appeared in "All the Year Round," with the following titles:—"Doubles," No. 222; "Theatrical Gagging," No. 271; "Goose," No. 200; "Come the Recorders," No. 146; "Stage Whispers," No. 150; "In the Pit," No. 154; "Bill of the Play," No. 156; "Stage Banquets," No. 164; "The Super," No. 175; "Strolling Players," No. 182; and "Stage Wigs," No. 185.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE IRELAND FORGERIES.

THE story of the Ireland forgeries is singularly interesting as exhibiting a *tour de force* second only to the more wonderful attempt of Chatterton. It wants, however, the romantic element, and the piteous issue which almost redeemed the follies of the "marvelous boy,"—beside whose genius and poetical power, the efforts of his imitator sink into a vulgar imposture. The cynic, however, may find a satisfaction in seeing how the Shakespearian critics of the day were duped, such of them, at least, whose pretensions amounted to no more than a vague enthusiasm, and vehement controversial ardor where their notes and commentaries were concerned.

One Samuel Ireland, who had been a Spitalfields silk mercer, had been led to abandon his trade for what was supposed to be antiquarian and literary pursuits, but which was virtually the adoption of a new trade. He collected rare old English editions with a view to their resale at large prices, a taste for securing such treasures then becoming fashionable. In these matters he had some knowledge, and a certain enthusiasm, which gave an interest and energy to his pursuit. He also devoted himself to the preparation of pictorial "journeys," illustrated by sepia lithographs, which occasionally turn up on stalls, and which were described at the time as "elegant Tours which may be regarded as works of standard taste." On one of his expeditions to Stratford he brought with him his son Wil-

liam Henry,* a lad of sixteen, whom the father's enthusiasm and the sight of the various relics of the place had inspired with quite a Shakespearian glow. By constantly dwelling on the subject, and living in a sort of Shakespearian atmosphere, this feeling soon became a sort of morbid passion or mania—so absorbing as to curiously extinguish all feeling of morality or principle. The young Ireland had heard of Chatterton's story, then recent. The extraord n ry interest which had been excited by it had a strange fascination for him. He himself was clever, skillful in shifts and devices of penmanship, and found himself irresistibly drawn to make attempts in the same direction. One trifling success was fatal encouragement. He possessed an old vellum-bound volume, with arms displayed on the covers, and a dedication from the author to Queen Elizabeth. A curious idea occurred to him. He mixed water with his ink to lighten the color, and on the fly leaf proceeded to compose and write a sort of inscription to the Queen ; as though the volume had been a presentation copy. He then brought it to his father, who, he says, was enchanted, and accepted it as genuine. This is his own story, but it will be seen later that it was currently believed that the father was privy to the whole imposture. Greatly encouraged by these praises, he was eager to go on : and the subject of his second attempt shows how reckless and daring he had become even already. He had noticed in a shop window a small terra-cotta bust of Cromwell, which had been rather cleverly executed by some living modeler. He brought it home, pasted a piece of paper on the back with an inscription in sham "old writing" to the effect that it had been "a present to Bradshaw" from the Protector himself. His father again fell into raptures. It was ex-

* Born 1775, died 1835.

hibited to the curious. Some of the clever people presently discovered that "it was *in the manner* of Simon," an eminent sculptor of Cromwell's day. But what was regarded as making the authority of the bust certain, was that the handwriting at the back was pronounced to be "wonderfully like Bradshaw's!"

The young fellow determined to aim at higher game. It was now in the year 1793, and he was just eighteen. He cut off a sheet of parchment from an old deed,—a binder whom he knew had shown him how to mix a more deceptive kind of ink,—and placing some writing of the period before him, he proceeded to prepare a lease between Shakespeare and one Hemminge, duly witnessed and sealed. To insure a difference in the handwriting he wrote the witnesses' name with his left hand. The seal was a more serious difficulty. He tried to melt down some of the seals attached to the old deed, but he found that, instead of softening, when he held them to the fire they were baked away into powder. His ingenuity suggested a better plan. He heated a sharp knife, sliced off the top surface with the impression, and, joining it to a piece of modern wax, inserted the usual piece of ribbon between to attach it to the deed. Having thus completed his task, he walked into his father's room, whom he was always thus surprising, saying, "Sir, I have a great curiosity to show you," then drew it out, and laid it on the table with "There, sir, what do you think of *that!*" The father was astonished and delighted. The curiosity was exhibited to the connoisseurs, and pronounced genuine beyond a doubt. Even the seal (selected at hazard), which bore the impression of a quintain, was found to be a device in some way connected with the Bard, and in a short time it came to be stated with all gravity that this "*was Shakespeare's favorite seal.*" No better satire than this, it may be repeated, could be

found on the state of self-delusion to which an immoderate passion may lead the collector. Mr. Pickwick's discovery is even less absurd.

The enthusiasm continued to increase, and numbers arrived every day to inspect the newly discovered treasure. It was tested and criticised in every way, and when there was any difficulty started, it was met by some ready solution. But already his discovery was bringing inconveniences. He was pressed with eager questionings—as to where the treasure had come from: where such a *trouvaille* had been more was certain to be: and forthwith a story had to be cautiously and ingeniously devised. The story was as follows:—It seems there was an old gentleman of antiquarian tastes with whom he had become acquainted at a coffee house, and, who finding out that he had an antiquarian taste, mentioned that he had a roomful of old papers, documents, &c., which he was welcome to examine, and also to take away what suited him. The young man had gone, and speedily discovered the precious Shakespearian deed. The old gentleman was a little surprised, but said he would not go back from his word. The young Ireland had also discovered some valuable family papers, and the old gentleman, grateful for the service, was glad to compliment him with a present. This cloudy story was accepted with all faith by the antiquarians, though not without impatience. *What was the name of this wonderful being*, whom they longed to invade? *That*, however, he had been solemnly pledged never to reveal. Presently, no less personages than Dr. Parr and Dr. Warton became interested in the subject, and curious to see the relics. There was not much, after all, to show such important people: but his father was pressing him to make fresh inquiries and searches; such remissness was culpable. So within a short time a "Profession of Faith" of a Protestant

character was discovered in Shakespeare's own handwriting. This treasure, it was announced, Doctors Parr and Warton were coming to see. He began to feel nervous, and would have given, he owns, anything to avoid the meeting. The document was inspected and read out, and to his amazement the great Dr. Parr said gravely, "Sir, we have very fine passages in our Services, *but here is one who has distanced us all!*" No wonder that his vanity was inflamed by so genuine a compliment. *His* work taken for Shakespeare's and by such judges! After this it is to be feared that not many antiquaries are able to withstand the seduction of an antique diction, or of antique writing, material, and other delusive elements.

Again the amateurs were pressing him to make fresh searches. His indifference was impatiently tolerated, and he was almost forced to manufacture a few trifles to stay their appetites. He discovered "the witty conundrum of Shakespere to Maister Cowley," a bit of nonsensical doggerel, in which, to his surprise, the admiring commentators discovered much point and significance, though, as he confesses, he had no distinct idea in his head. Growing bolder, he next discovered "a letter to Anne Hathaway," —and as he was completing it, it occurred to him that a lock of hair would be a dramatic inclosure. He bethought him of such a souvenir given him by an old flame. The modern thread with which it was tied up was a difficulty; but his artful enthusiasm was prepared, and he drew a thread out of the tapestry in the House of Lords, which was ancient enough. The hair was unanimously pronounced to answer to the traditions of the Shakespearian hair, was reverentially kissed, and portions of it set in rings.

All this time, however, he had a presentiment of danger. Mr. Albany Wallis—who was Garrick's solicitor, and a shrewd intelligent man—discovered among some old deeds,

a signature of John Hemminge's, Shakespeare's lessee. He sent for Ireland and showed him that the signature did not in the least resemble the fictitious one. Here was an awkward discovery. The young man felt his heart sink, but had composure enough to say that it was very strange, but he thought that he could clear the matter up. As he was walking home he devised a scheme: then sat down, and from memory imitated the signature that had just been shown to him and attached it to a receipt. He then repaired to Mr. Wallis and told this story: He had been to the old gentleman, and related the curious discovery that had been made, when the latter "shook his head with meaning, and smilingly said, 'Take *that* to Mr. Wallis.'" How could Mr. Wallis know that there were *two* Hemminges, "one of the Globe, the other of the Curtain Theatre"? The Globe actor was distinguished as "tall John Hemminge," the Curtain actor as "short John." This elaborate falsehood was hurriedly fabricated during the few minutes that he was walking home; and it shows that his mind had a natural bent in the direction of deceit. The explanation was accepted and the danger, for the present, escaped.

Some of these freaks were no doubt prompted by a desire to victimize the antiquarian gulls, whose ignorance was really inviting deception. Thus he chanced to see an old Dutch portrait in a curiosity shop. He put a pair of scales into the hand and added W. S. in the corner. He had only to announce that it came from the old gentleman's magazine, and the antiquarians recognized it as the immortal Bard himself "in the character of Shylock!" "It had probably been hung up in the green-room," in compliment to "Maister Shakespere!" Other "relics" were produced from time to time, and the "curious" came in such crowds, that particular days in the week were an-

nounced by advertisement when they would be exhibited in Norfolk Street. A declaration of belief in the authenticity of the papers was drawn up by the crafty father, which visitors supposed to be judges were invited to sign: and later, to such a declaration were found attached the names of Dr. Parr, Herbert Croft, Duke of Somerset, Garter King at Arms, Boswell, and others. Mr. Boswell took the matter up with his usual enthusiasm, and, kneeling down, thanked God that he had lived to see that day. Porson, however, excused himself with the pleasant remark that he detested signing *articles* of any description, especially *articles of faith*.

It was scarcely wonderful that, with such encouragement, a still bolder step should have been taken. Hitherto there had been much credit, a good deal of reputation, but no profit. The Irelands were little more than dealers in literary curiosities, and there was no reason why the Bard should not be made to bring pecuniary advantages. Surprise had often been expressed that in such a treasury of old papers no PLAY had been discovered. The poet must surely have left behind him, in company with the other scraps, some rude sketches of scenes, acts—or possibly an entire drama, which had been rejected as not quite up to his standard. This was like an invitation, and soon hints were thrown out that the investigator was on the track. Presently the antiquarians were thrown into a delirium of joy by learning that a tragedy entitled VORTIGERN and ROWENA, by W. Shakespere, had been recovered.

No time was lost. Offers were received from the managers. One from Harris of Covent Garden was declined, one from Sheridan of Drury Lane was accepted. That versatile genius had his suspicions, and was staggered by the prosy and un-Shakespearian character of many of the lines. Indeed he was said to have declared to some friends

that the piece might no doubt have been Shakespeare's work, but that he must have been *drunk* when he wrote it. Three hundred pounds was to be paid for the treasure, and the profits of the first sixty nights of performance divided between the sponsors and the manager. Great expense was gone to for scenery, and the parts allotted to Kemble and other important performers.

But it was felt that this was going too far. A few men of real critical sagacity, such as Malone and Steevens, were persuaded by a sort of instinct that such "discoveries" were *à priori* impossible, or inconsistent with what their own labors had taught them. Reed, Farmer, Ritson, Percy, and Douglas, the Bishop of Salisbury (who had already exposed another imposture, Lauder's) denounced the whole as a monstrous forgery. These names carried more weight than those of amateurs like Garter King at Arms, the impulsive Boswell, or even the eccentric Parr. The specimens furnished, to be followed by others, placed the discoveries in fatally convenient shape for sober investigation and critical testing; and Malone flung himself on these with professional ardor and merciless severity.*

An ordinary reader would see that this was but a *réchauffé* of Portia's speech. And indeed it was upon this principle that the fabrication had proceeded, working in Shakesperian phrases and allusions, in absolute dearth of inspiration. But Malone showed with overwhelming force the blunders into which the writer had fallen. The letter was addressed to "Anne Hathirrewaye," whereas the old spelling is invariably Hathaway. There was no "For"

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* He took, for instance, the letter to Anne Hathaway, which ran:—"No rude hande hath knottedde itte. Thye Willys alone hathe done the worke. Neytherre the gyldedde bawble thatte envyronnes the heade of majestye, noe norre honoures most weyghtye wulde give me halfe the joye as didde thysse mye lyttle worke forre thee."

or "To" preceding the name, the usual form of superscription; the "gyldedde Bawble," he showed could not have been Shakespeare's phrase—who always spoke of the "Crown," simply—while his loyalty would have forbidden him such a phrase. These objections, and many more he embodied in a masterly exposure.*

His labors took the shape of a "letter to the Lord Charlemont, in which it is proved from orthography, phraseology, dates given, or deducible by inference, and dissimilitude of handwriting, that not a single paper or deed in this extraordinary volume was written or executed by the person to whom it was ascribed." Edmund Burke paid the work the odd compliment "that he had got to the seventy-third page before he went to sleep,"—but justly declared that in it "was revived the spirit of that sort of criticism by which false pretense and imposture are detected," and which had grown so rare in England.

This "inquiry" appeared at an awkward moment for the fabricators—on the very eve of the performance. It was found necessary to distribute a handbill at the doors, which ran:—

"VORTIGERN.

"A malevolent and impudent attack on the Shakespeare MSS. having appeared on the eve of representation of the play of 'Vortigern,' evidently intended to injure the interest of the proprietor of the MSS., Mr. Ireland feels it impossible, within the short space of time that intervenes between the publishing and the representation, to produce an answer to the most illiberal and unfounded assertions in Mr.

* Indeed, it is hard to resist a smile on looking at these attempts, which suggest the conventional old English with which historical novelists attempt to reproduce the times of King Hal and Queen Bess. An inscription said to have been found at the beginning of a copy of "King Lear" ran thus:—"The Tragedy of Kynge Lear isse fromme Masterre Hollineshedde. I have inne somme lyttle departedde fromme hymme, butte thatte libbertye wille notte I truste be blammedde by mye gentle readerres."

Malone's enquiry. He is therefore induced to request that the play of 'Vortigern' may be heard with that candor which has ever distinguished a British audience."

This of course tended to increase the excitement, which about the doors of the theatre was enormous: opposition handbills being distributed, describing the piece as "a rank forgery." It was evident, however, that serious perils were in store for it, both before and behind the scenes. Kemble was in one of those grim humors which are favorite weaknesses of great tragedians, and had shown a marked hostility from the beginning. He had, as it were, washed his hands of the business: and when the sponsor (or author) begged that he would use his judgment in preparing the piece for the stage, the reply he received was that "it should be acted faithfully from the copy sent to the theatre." He was no doubt encouraged by the success of a similar fit of ill-humor only a few nights before. The parts, it was said, had been distributed with studious effort to make the piece as ineffective as possible. Mrs. Siddons had finally declined the heroine, believing the whole to be "an audacious imposture."

Inside, the house presented an extraordinary scene. It was crammed to the roof, while conspicuous in a centre box was the Ireland party. Many had paid box prices, when no seats were to be obtained, for the purpose of getting down into the pit. The air was charged with the murmurs of contending factions, and the partisans and concoctors of the fraud felt uneasy presentiments. The performance began. The young fabricator was behind the scenes, nervous, agitated, but received kindly encouragement from the good-natured Jordan, who performed in the piece.

With occasional signs of disapprobation, all went fairly for a couple of acts. But the opponents were only reserv-

ing their powers. The absurdities of some of the actors then came in aid, and were greeted with derision: as when Dignum, a pleasing singer, but no actor, gave out in a guttural croak an invitation to the trumpets, "Let them *bellow* on!" it was not unnaturally greeted with a shout of laughter; or when Mr. Philimore, a comic performer with a large nose, who had been fitted with the part of "the Saxon general, Horsus," was killed in due course, fresh amusement was produced by his dying agonies. As the drop-scene descended, the heavy roller rested on his chest, and it was some time before he could be extricated, his groans reaching the audience, and convulsing the house with merriment. But Kemble contributed most to the general "damnation": all through he had preserved a stolid and conscientious bearing, not making the least exertion, but delivering the lines in a funereal fashion. As he spoke various Shakespearian passages, the audience, with unusual intelligence, would call out, "Henry IV.," "Othello," or whatever play the line was stolen from.* But at last it went beyond endurance, and Kemble gave the signal for the *coup de grâce* by his delivering of some lines on death:—

> 'O thou that dost ope wide thy hideous jaws,
> And with rude laughter and fantastic tricks
> Thou clappest thy rattling fingers to thy side—
> *And when this solemn mockery is o'er*—"

Here one universal shout pointed the application of the speech, and a chorus of groans, catcalls, and the usual hurricane of theatrical disapprobation sealed the fate of the

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* The mock stuff was, however, ingeniously put together, as in the passages:—

> "Give me a sword!
> I have so clogg'd and badged this with blood
> And slippery gore, that it doth mock my grasp."

play. As soon as there was a lull, Kemble, with a cruel iteration, slowly and lugubriously repeated the line—

"And when this solemn mockery is o'er,"

which provoked a fresh howl, and the whole closed in confusion.

The play was of course never acted again, though the fabricator was paid on the following morning. Notwithstanding this rude shock, the impostors proceeded in their task with even more confidence. The book had appeared, a magnificent volume, full of illustrations and facsimiles, and sold at an enormous price. Even now it excites wonder, from the ingenuity and elaborateness with which the deception is carried out. Had it appeared before the play, it would have brought in a splendid sum to the concocters. But more than suspicion had been aroused. A loud clamor arose that the name of the mysterious old gentleman, the owner of the treasures, should be given up. A committee was appointed to examine the question, which suggested that two of their number should be selected who were to be informed of the gentleman's name, and sworn to secrecy. In an agony of doubt, the wretched young fellow knew not what course to take, and at last bethought him of throwing himself on the generosity of Mr. Albany Wallis, the solicitor, and confessing the whole story to him. He was naturally amazed at the revelation. Ireland asked him what was to be done. He good-naturedly promised to keep silence, and would give out that the gentleman did not consider it safe to trust his secret to the public. Still this was only staving the matter off. At last, pressed and harassed on all sides, the youth fled from home, and swore an affidavit before a magistrate, clearing his father, who had been attacked by Malone; then, after an absence returned to his father to confess the whole. The father, he says,

was inexpressibly astonished, and could not believe the story; then, affected to cast him off altogether as an impostor.

Such is the story told by the young man himself in his curious "confessions." It will be seen that the object was to enlist sympathy, as in the case of Chatterton, for a youth lamentably led astray, but with a genius and cleverness that deserved indulgence.

But Steevens and others were not to be thus imposed upon. It was believed that the father, an old hand at such fabrications, had been the chief contriver, and that the house in Northumberland Street was no more than an elaborate workshop, in which the whole family labored. The quarrel between the father and son, was supposed to have been got up with a view "of whitewashing the father," whose business it would have fatally destroyed.*

A volume which he had issued, containing designs by Hogarth, long considered to be spurious, was recollected. He was also a collector of books belonging to the Shakespearian era, which he decorated with fabricated inscriptions on the fly-leaves and margins, and sold as rarities. This seemed almost conclusive, or at least more probable than that a lad of sixteen should have shown such precocious ability. A daughter was said to have labored at the forged autographs. Finally, as Ireland had showed deceit in the imposition, his elaborate "confessions" might be equally open to the charge of being untruthful.

The rest of the story is uninteresting. He is said to have become a sort of hack writer, and died, in the year 1835, in miserable circumstances.

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* Steevens to Bishop Percy. See also note in "Willis' Current Notes," from a gentleman well acquainted with the family.

# CHAPTER X.

## MRS. ROBINSON.*

CLOSE to the Bristol cathedral used to stand a mansion, half a ruin, half a modern restoration, in which the well-known heroine Mary Darby, or Robinson, or "Perdita," was born. "In this awe-inspiring habitation," she says in her high-flown memoirs, "which I shall henceforth denominate the Minster-house, during a tempestuous night, on the twenty-seventh of November, 1758, I first opened my eyes to this world of duplicity and sorrow. I have often heard my mother say that a more stormy hour she never remembered. The wind whistled round the dark pinnacles of the minster tower, and the rain beat in torrents against the casements of her chamber. Through life the tempest has followed my footsteps, and I have in vain looked for a short interval of repose from the perseverance of sorrow."

From this introduction, a fair idea may be gathered of the melodramatic nature of the fair creature who is about to relate her adventures. Beautiful, interesting, romantic, persecuted by those who should have protected her, pursued by wicked men, and further, abandoned by the faithless lover who had led her astray, her story reads like some agonizing heroine's in the old romances. And though the life of one so frail as well as so fair, is to be sternly judged according to the conventional law of society, it will be seen that some allowance must be made for her position. Her family was of Irish origin, and formerly bore the name

* Born 1758, died 1800.

of Macdermott, which was changed to that of Darby; her father, "a man of strong mind, high spirit, and great personal intrepidity," was half an American, and all his life addicted to speculations and pleasure. When his little girl Mary was at a school kept by the Misses More, sisters of the famous Hannah, he conceived a vast Quixotic scheme of founding a great fishing settlement on the Labrador, and set off for America to arrange for carrying it out. His wife and family were left behind in England. After three years' absence he returned, nearly all his fortune having been swallowed up through the Indians having destroyed the settlement. He then deserted his family, his wife having been compelled to open a small school, so as to earn means for the support of herself and her children. On this intelligence reaching him, he characteristically became angry at what he considered was a degradation to his name, and insisted on the school being broken up.

His daughter Mary, then about fourteen or fifteen years old, and showing great signs of beauty and intelligence, had been taking some lessons in dancing from a master who was connected with Covent Garden Theatre. This Professor was so struck with her intelligence that he spoke of her to one of the actors. Mr. Garrick, who was then retiring from the stage, was later induced to allow her to exhibit before him, and was so delighted that he proposed that she should appear with him. But these dazzling plans were interrupted by a more important matter.

A gentleman who constantly appeared at the opposite window, and showed signs of his admiration, attracted her. "One evening, a party of six was proposed for the following Sunday; with much persuasion my mother consented to go, and to allow that I should also attend her. Greenwich was the place fixed on for the dinner; and we prepared for the day of recreation. It was then the fashion

to wear silks. I remember that I wore a nightgown of pale blue lustring, with a chip hat, trimmed with ribbands of the same color. Never was I dressed so perfectly to my own satisfaction: I anticipated a day of admiration; Heaven can bear witness that, to me, it was a day of fatal victory!

"On our stopping at the Star and Garter, at Greenwich, the person who came to hand me from the carriage was our opposite neighbor in Southampton Buildings. I was confused; but my mother was indignant! Mr. Wayman presented his young friend—that friend who was ordained to be MY HUSBAND.

"Our party dined; and early in the evening we returned to London. Mr. Robinson remained at Greenwich for the benefit of the air, being recently recovered from a fit of sickness. During the remainder of the evening, Mr. Wayman expatiated on the many good qualities of his friend Mr. Robinson, spoke of his future expectations from a rich old uncle, of his probable advancement in his profession, and, more than all, of his enthusiastic admiration of me.

"A few days after, Mr. Robinson paid my mother a visit. We had now removed to Villiers Street, York Buildings. My mother's fondness for books of a moral and religious character was not lost upon my new lover; and elegantly bound editions of Hervey's Meditations, with some others of a similar description, were presented, as small tokens of admiration and respect. My mother was beguiled by these little interesting attentions, and soon began to feel a strong predilection in favor of Mr. Robinson."

During the illness that followed, Mr. Robinson was so devoted that a consent was at last extorted and the marriage took place:—the bride being so youthful that only three months before she had given up dressing her dolls. To her great surprise Mr. Robinson insisted that the matter

should be kept secret, owing to family reasons, and to a fear of displeasing a firm of attorneys to whom he was articled. After a short time she began to have suspicions, and it was insisted that the bride should be taken to see the important uncle in Wales, to whom her husband gave out that he was heir—but whose illegitimate son he in reality was; unable to make further excuses, he consented, and both set off for Wales, and arrived at Mr. Harris's house.

"Mr. Harris came out to receive me. I wore a dark claret-colored riding-habit, with a white beaver hat and feathers. He embraced me with excessive cordiality, while Miss Robinson, my husband's sister, with cold formality led me into the house. I never shall forget her looks or her manner. Had her brother presented the most abject being to her, she could not have taken my hand with a more frigid demeanor. Miss Robinson, though not more than twenty years of age, was Gothic in her appearance, and stiff in her deportment; she was of low stature, and clumsy, with a countenance peculiarly formed for the expression of sarcastic vulgarity—a short snub nose, turned up at the point, a head thrown back with an air of *hauteur*, a gaudy-colored chintz gown, a thrice-bordered cap, with a profusion of ribbands, and a countenance somewhat more ruddy than was consistent with even pure health, presented the personage whom I was to know as my future companion and kinswoman!

"Mr. Harris looked like a venerable Hawthorn; a brown fustian coat, a scarlet waistcoat edged with narrow gold, a pair of woollen splatter-dashes, and a gold-laced hat, formed the dress he generally wore. He always rode a small Welsh pony; and was seldom in the house, excepting at meal-time, from sunrise to the close of evening.

"There was yet another personage in the domestic es-

tablishment, who was by Mr. Harris regarded as of no small importance: this was a venerable housekeeper, of the name of Mary Edwards. Mrs. Molly was the female Mentor of the family; she dined at the table with Mr. Harris; she was the governess of the domestic department: and a more overbearing, vindictive spirit never inhabited the heart of mortal, than that which pervaded the soul of the ill-natured Mrs. Molly.

"It may easily be conjectured that my time passed heavily in this uninteresting circle. I was condemned either to drink ale with 'the Squire,' for Mr. Harris was only spoken of by that title, or to visit the Methodistical seminary which Lady Huntingdon had established at Trevecca, another mansion-house on the estate of Mr. Harris. Miss Robinson was of this sect; and though Mr. Harris was not a disciple of the Huntingdonian School, he was a constant church visitor on every Sunday. His zeal was indefatigable; and he would frequently fine the rustics (for he was a justice of the peace, and had been sheriff of the county) when he heard them swear, though every third sentence he uttered was attended by an oath that made his hearers shudder.

"I soon became a considerable favorite with the *Squire;* but I did not find any yielding qualities about the hearts of Miss Betsy or Mrs. Molly. They observed me with jealous eyes; they considered me as an interloper, whose manner attracted Mr. Harris's esteem, and who was likely to diminish their divided influence in the family. I found them daily growing weary of my society; I perceived their sidelong glances when I was complimented by the visiting neighbors on my good looks, or taste in the choice of my dresses. Miss Robinson rode on horseback in a camlet safe-guard, with a high-crowned bonnet. I wore a fashionable habit, and looked like something human. Envy

at length assumed the form of insolence, and I was taunted perpetually on the folly of appearing like a woman of fortune; that a lawyer's wife had no right to dress like a duchess; and that, though I might be very accomplished, a good housewife had no occasion for harpsichords and books; they belonged to women who brought wherewithal to support them. Such was the language of vulgar illiberal natures! yet for three weeks I endured it patiently.

"Knowing that Mr. Harris was disposed to think favorably of me—that he even declared he should 'have liked me for his wife, had I not *married Tom*,' though he was then between sixty and seventy years of age, I thought it most prudent to depart, lest through the machinations of Miss Betsy and Mrs. Molly I should lose the share I had gained in his affections. My mother was still at Bristol; and the morning of our departure being arrived, to my infinite astonishment, Mr. Harris proposed accompanying us thither. It was in vain that Molly and Miss interfered to prevent him; he swore that he would see me safe across the Channel, whatever might be the consequence of his journey. We set out together.

"After passing many days at Bristol, Mr. Harris returned to Wales, and our party set out for London. Mr. Robinson's mind was easy, and his hopes were confirmed by the kindness of his uncle: he now considered himself as the most happy of mortals. We removed from Great Queen Street, to a house, No. 13, in Hatton Garden, which had been recently built. Mr. Robinson hired it, and furnished it with peculiar elegance. I frequently inquired into the extent of his finances, and he as often assured me that they were in every respect competent to his expenses. In addition to our domestic establishment, Mr. Robinson purchased a handsome phaeton, with saddle horses for his own use; and I now made my *début*, though scarcely emerged

beyond the boundaries of childhood, in the broad hemisphere of fashionable folly.

"A new face, a young person dressed with peculiar but simple elegance, was sure to attract attention at places of public entertainment. The first time I went to Ranelagh my habit was so singularly plain and quaker-like, that all eyes were fixed upon me. I wore a gown of light brown lustring with close round cuffs (it was then the fashion to wear long ruffles); my hair was without powder, and my head adorned with a plain round cap and a white chip hat, without any ornaments whatever.

"The second place of polite entertainment, to which Mr. Robinson accompanied me, was the Pantheon Concert, then the most fashionable assemblage of the gay and the distinguished. At this place it was customary to appear much dressed; large hoops and high feathers were universally worn.

"As soon as I entered the Pantheon Rotunda, I never shall forget the impression which my mind received: the splendor of the scene, the dome illuminated with variegated lamps, the music, and the beauty of the women, seemed to present a circle of enchantment. I recollect that the most lovely of fair forms met my eyes in that of Lady Almeria Carpenter. The countenance which most pleased me was that of the late Mrs. Baddeley. The first Countess of Tyrconnel also appeared with considerable *éclat*. But the buzz of the room, the unceasing murmur of admiration, attended the Marchioness of Townshend. I took my seat on a sofa nearly opposite to that on which she was sitting, and I observed two persons, evidently men of fashion, speaking to her; till one of them, looking towards me, with an audible voice inquired of the other 'Who is she?'

"Their fixed stare disconcerted me. I rose, and lean-

ing on my husband's arm, again mingled in the brilliant circle. The inquirers followed us, stopping several friends, as we walked round the circle, and repeatedly demanding of them, 'Who is that young lady in the pink dress trimmed with sable?' My manner and confusion plainly evinced that I was not accustomed to the gaze of impertinent high breeding. I felt uneasy, and proposed returning home, when I perceived that our two followers were joined by a third, who, on looking at me, said, 'I think I know her.' It was the late Earl of Northington.

"We had now to pass the group in order to quit the rotunda. Lord Northington, leaving his companions, approached me. 'Miss Darby, or I am mistaken,' said he, with a bow of marked civility. I replied that my name was now changed to that of Robinson: and, to prevent any awkward embarrassment, presented my husband, on whose arm I was still leaning. Lord Northington continued to walk round the Pantheon with us, made many inquiries after my father, complimented me on the improvement of my person, and hoped that he should be permitted to pay his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson.

"We now entered the tea-room: there was not a seat vacant: I was considerably fatigued, and somewhat faint with the heat of the rotunda. I quitted the tea-room, and seated myself on a sofa near the door. In a few minutes Lord Northington brought me a cup of tea, for Mr. Robinson did not like to leave me alone; and at the same time presented his two inquisitive friends, Lord Lyttelton and Captain Ayscough.

"I now proposed departing. Mr. Robinson accompanied me to the vestibule; and while he was seeking the carriage Lord Lyttelton offered his services. I had never till that evening heard his name; but there was an easy effrontery in his address that completely disgusted me,

while his determined gaze distressed and embarrassed me; and I felt inexpressible satisfaction when Mr. Robinson returned to tell me that the carriage was ready. On the following morning Lords Northington, Lyttelton, and Colonel Ayscough made their visits of ceremony. Mr. Robinson was not at home, but I received them, though not without some embarrassment. I was yet a child, and wholly unacquainted with the manners of the world. Yet, young as I was, I became the traveler of its mazy and perilous paths; at an age when girls are generally at school, or indeed scarcely emancipated from the nursery, I was presented in society as a wife—and very nearly as a mother. Lord Lyttelton who was perhaps the most accomplished libertine that any age or country has produced, with considerable artifice inquired after Mr. Robinson, professed his earnest desire to cultivate his acquaintance, and on the following day sent him a card of invitation. Fortunately for me, Lord Lyttelton was uniformly my aversion. His manners were overbearingly insolent, his language licentious, and his person slovenly even to a degree that was disgusting. Mr. Robinson was in every respect the very reverse of his companion: he was unassuming, neat and delicate in his conversation. I had not a wish to descend from the propriety of wedded life; and I abhorred, decidedly abhorred, the acquaintance with Lord Lyttelton.

"In the course of a few days his Lordship presented me the works of Miss Aikin, now Mrs. Barbauld: I read them with rapture: I thought them the most beautiful poems I had ever seen; and considered the woman who could invent such poetry, as the most to be envied of human creatures. Lord Lyttelton had some taste for poetical compositions, and wrote verses with considerable facility.

"On the following Monday, I again visited the Pantheon. My dress was then white and silver. Again I was followed

with attention. Lord Lyttelton was my *cavaliere servente* that evening; though, as usual, his chief attention was paid to Mr. Robinson. During the concert, he presented the Count de Belgioso, the Imperial Ambassador, one of the most accomplished foreigners I ever remember to have met. Lord Valentia was also introduced; but, as his Lordship had recently made some *éclat* by his attentions to the celebrated Mrs. Elliot, I rather avoided than wished to cultivate his acquaintance.

"Mr. Robinson's intercourse with the world was now rapidly augmenting. Every day was productive of some new association. Lord Lyttelton presented many of his friends: among others Captain O'Byrne, and Mr. William Brereton of Drury Lane Theatre. In the course of a short time we also became acquainted with Sir Francis Molyneux, Mr. Alderman Sayer, and the late unfortunate George Robert Fitzgerald. Lord Northington was also a constant visitor, and frequently rallied me on what he thought my striking likeness to his family.

"I soon discovered that his intercourse with Lord Lyttelton produced a very considerable change in Mr. Robinson's domestic deportment. They were constantly together, and the neglect which I experienced began to alarm me. I dedicated all my leisure hours to poetry: I wrote verses of all sorts; and Mr. Robinson having mentioned that I had purposed appearing on the stage previous to my marriage, in the character of Cordelia, Lord Lyttelton facetiously christened me the Poetess Corry.

"It was with extreme regret, and frequently with uncontrollable indignation, that I endured the neglect of my husband and the tauntings of the profligate Lyttelton—'The child,' for so he generally called me, was deserted for the society of the most libertine men and the most abandoned women. Mr. Robinson became not only care-

less of his wife, but of his pecuniary concerns; while I was kept in total ignorance as to the resources which supplied his increasing expenses.

"Among the most dangerous of my husband's associates was George Robert Fitzgerald. His manners towards women were interesting and attentive: he perceived the neglect with which I was treated by Mr. Robinson, and the pernicious influence which Lord Lyttelton had acquired over his mind: he professed to feel the warmest interest in my welfare, lamented the destiny which had befallen me, in being wedded to a man incapable of estimating my value, and at last confessed *himself* my most ardent and devoted admirer. I shuddered at the declaration, for amidst all the allurements of splendid folly, my mind, the purity of my virtue, was still uncontaminated.

"I repulsed the dangerous advances of this accomplished person; but I did not the less feel the humiliation to which a husband's indifference had exposed me. God can bear witness to the purity of my soul; even surrounded by temptations, and mortified by neglect. Whenever I ventured to inquire into pecuniary resources, Mr. Robinson silenced me by saying he was independent: added to this assurance, Lord Lyttelton repeatedly promised that, through his courtly interest, he would very shortly obtain for my husband some honorable and lucrative situation.

"I confess that I reposed but little confidence in the promises of such a man, though my husband believed them inviolable. Frequent parties were made at his Lordship's house in Hill Street, and many invitations pressed for a visit to his seat at Hagley. These I peremptorily refused; till the noble hypocrite became convinced of my aversion, and adopted a new mode of pursuing his machinations.

"One forenoon Lord Lyttelton called in Hatton Garden,

as was almost his daily custom; and, on finding that Mr. Robinson was not at home, requested to speak with me on business of importance. I found him seemingly much distressed. He informed me that he had a secret to communicate of considerable moment both to my interest and happiness. I started: 'Nothing, I trust in heaven, has befallen my husband!' said I, with a voice scarcely articulate. Lord Lyttelton hesitated. 'How little does that husband deserve the solicitude of such a wife!' said he; 'but,' continued his Lordship, 'I fear that I have in some degree aided in alienating his conjugal affections. I could not bear to see such youth, such merit, so sacrificed.' 'Speak briefly, my Lord,' said I. 'Then,' replied Lord Lyttelton, 'I must inform you that your husband is the most false and undeserving of that name!' . . .

"'I do not believe it,' said I, indignantly. 'Then you shall be convinced,' answered his Lordship—'but remember, if you betray your true and zealous friend, I must fight your husband; for he never will forgive my having discovered his infidelity.'

"'It cannot be true,' said I. 'You have been misinformed.'

"'Hear me,' said he. 'You cannot be a stranger to my motives for thus cultivating the friendship of your husband: my fortune is at your disposal. Robinson is a ruined man; his debts are considerable, and nothing but destruction can await you. Leave him. Command my powers to serve you.'

'I would hear no more—my hours were all dedicated to sorrow; for I now heard that my husband even at the period of his marriage, had an attachment which he had not broken; and that his infidelities were as public as the ruin of his finances was inevitable. I remonstrated—I was almost frantic. My distress was useless; my wishes to

retrench our expenses were ineffectual. Lord Lyttelton now rested his only hope in the certainty of my husband's ruin. He therefore took every step and embraced every opportunity to involve him more deeply in calamity. Parties were made to Richmond and Salthill, to Ascot Heath and Epsom races; in all of which Mr. Robinson bore his share of expense, with the addition of post-horses. Whenever he seemed to shrink from his augmenting indiscretion, Lord Lyttelton assured him that, through his interest, an appointment of honorable and pecuniary importance should be obtained: though I embraced every opportunity to assure his Lordship that no consideration upon earth should ever make me the victim of his artifice.

"Mr. Fitzgerald still paid me unremitting attention. His manners *towards women* were beautifully interesting. He frequently cautioned me against the libertine Lyttelton, and as frequently lamented the misguided confidence which Mr. Robinson reposed in him

"About this time a party was one evening made to Vauxhall. Mr. Fitzgerald was the person who proposed it, and it consisted of six or eight persons. The night was warm, and the gardens crowded; we supped in the circle which has the statue of Handel in its centre. The hour growing late, or rather early in the morning, our company dispersed, and no one remained excepting Mr. Robinson, Mr. Fitzgerald, and myself. Suddenly a noise was heard near the orchestra; a crowd had assembled, and two gentlemen were quarreling furiously. Mr. R. and Fitzgerald ran out of the box. I rose to follow them, but they were lost in the throng, and I thought it most prudent to resume my place, which I had just quitted, as the only certain way of their finding me in safety. In a moment Fitzgerald returned: 'Robinson,' said he, 'is gone to seek you at the entrance-door; he thought you had quitted the box.' 'I did for a

moment,' said I, 'but I was fearful of losing him in the crowd, and therefore returned.'

"'Let me conduct you to the door; we shall certainly find him there,' replied Mr. Fitzgerald: 'I know that he will be uneasy.' I took his arm, and we ran hastily towards the entrance-door on the Vauxhall Road.

"Mr. Robinson was not there: we proceeded to look for our carriage, it stood at some distance. I was alarmed and bewildered. Mr. Fitzgerald hurried me along. 'Don't be uneasy, we shall certainly find him,' said he, 'for I left him here not five minutes ago.' As he spoke he stopped abruptly; a servant opened a chaise door; there were four horses harnessed to it: and, by the light of the lamps on the side of the foot-path, I plainly perceived a pistol in the pocket of the door, which was open. I drew back. Mr. Fitzgerald placed his arm round my waist, and endeavored to lift me up the step of the chaise; the servant watching at a little distance. I resisted, and inquired what he meant by such conduct; his hand trembled excessively, while he said in a low voice: 'Robinson can but fight me.' I was terrified beyond all description:—I made him loose his hold—and ran towards the entrance-door. Mr. Fitzgerald now perceived Mr. Robinson. 'Here he comes!' exclaimed he with an easy *nonchalance*. 'We had found the wrong carriage, Mr. Robinson: we have been looking after you, and Mrs. Robinson is alarmed beyond expression.'

"'I am indeed!' said I. Mr. Robinson now took my hand. We stepped into the coach, and Mr. Fitzgerald followed. As we proceeded towards Hatton Garden, the sky incessantly flashed lightning. I was terrified by the combination of events; and I was in a situation which rendered any alarm peculiarly dangerous, for I was several months advanced in that state which afterwards terminated by presenting to me my only child—my *darling* MARIA.

"I had often heard of Mr. Fitzgerald's propensity to dueling—I recollected my own delicate situation—I valued my husband's safety, I therefore did not mention the adventure of the evening: particularly as Mr. Fitzgerald observed, in our way to Hatton Garden, that he had 'nearly made a strange mistake, and taken possession of another person's carriage.' This remark appeared so plausible that nothing further was said upon the subject.

"From that evening I was particularly cautious in avoiding Fitzgerald. He was too daring, and too fascinating a being, to be allowed the smallest marks of confidence. Whenever he called, I was denied to him: and at length, perceiving the impracticability of his plan, he desisted, and seldom called excepting to leave his name, as a visitor of ceremony.

"I do not recount these events, these plans for my enthrallment, with a view to convey anything like personal vanity; for I can with truth affirm that I never thought myself entitled to admiration that could endanger my security.

"I was now known, by name, at every public place in and near the metropolis: our circle of acquaintances enlarged daily; my friend Lady Yea was my constant companion. Mr. Robinson became desperate, from a thorough conviction that no effort of economy or professional labor could arrange his shattered finances: the large debt which he owed *previous to his marriage with me,* having laid the foundation for every succeeding embarrassment.

"The moment now approached when the arcanum was to be developed; and an execution on Mr. Robinson's effects, at the suit of an annuitant, decided the doubts and fears which had long afflicted me. I was in a great degree prepared for this event, by the evident inquietude of my husband's mind, and his frequent interviews with persons

of a mysterious description. Indeed this crisis seemed rather consolatory than appalling."

After many trials and humiliations she went to the country, but soon came back to London. She brought a small collection of poems with her, which she intended publishing, and her "sweet Maria." A few days after her arrival she was induced again to visit Ranalagh, when the persevering Mr. Fitzgerald and odious Lyttelton again pursued her with their attentions. Her husband was almost at once arrested, and his beautiful wife took up her abode with him in the prison. There seemed to be no prospect of extrication, when the idea of the stage again recurred. Friends assisted; she was introduced to Sheridan, who affected to be astonished by her powers, though he was more probably calculating what an addition such a fascinating creature would be to the ranks of his actresses. Mr. Robinson, who possessed more than the average ingenuity and shifts of needy men, soon obtained his release, and the matter was now pushed forward with great zeal and earnestness.

"The only objection which I felt to the idea of appearing on the stage was my then increasing state of domestic solicitude. I was, at the period when Mr. Sheridan was first presented to me, some months advanced in that situation which afterwards, by the birth of Sophia, made me a second time a mother. Yet such was my imprudent fondness for Maria that I was still a nurse; and my constitution was very considerably impaired by the effects of these combining circumstances.

"An appointment was made in the green-room of Drury-Lane Theatre. Mr. Garrick, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Brereton, and my husband were present; I there recited the principal scenes of Juliet, Mr. Brereton repeating those of Romeo, and Mr. Garrick, without hesitation, fixed on that character as a trial part for my *début*.

"It is impossible to describe the various emotions of hope and fear that possessed my mind when the important day was announced in the play-bills.

"The theatre was crowded with fashionable spectators: the green-room and orchestra (where Mr. Garrick sat during the night) were thronged with critics. My dress was a pale pink satin, trimmed with crape, richly spangled with silver; my head was ornamented with white feathers, and my monumental suit, for the last scene, was white satin and completely plain; excepting that I wore a veil of the most transparent gauze, which fell quite to my feet from the back of my head, and a string of beads round my waist, to which was suspended a cross appropriately fashioned.

"When I approached the side wing my heart throbbed convulsively: I then began to fear that my resolution would fail, and I leaned upon the nurse's arm, almost fainting. Mr. Sheridan and several other friends encouraged me to proceed; and at length, with trembling limbs and fearful apprehension, I approached the audience.

"The thundering applause that greeted me nearly overpowered all my faculties. I stood mute and bending with alarm, which did not subside till I had feebly articulated the few sentences of the first short scene, during the whole of which I had never once ventured to look at the audience. On my return to the green-room, I was again encouraged, as far as my looks were deemed deserving of approbation; for of my powers nothing yet could be known, my fears having as it were palsied both my voice and action. The second scene being the masquerade, I had time to collect myself. I never shall forget the sensation which rushed through my bosom when I first looked towards the pit. I beheld a gradual ascent of heads: all eyes were fixed upon me; and the sensation they conveyed was awfully impres-

sive: but the keen, the penetrating eyes of Mr. Garrick, darting their lustre from the centre of the orchestra, were, beyond all others, the objects most conspicuous.

"As I acquired courage I found the applause augment; and the night was concluded with peals of clamorous approbation. I was complimented on all sides; but the praise of one object, whom most I wished to please, was flattering even to the extent of human vanity. I then experienced, for the first time in my life, a gratification which language could not utter. I had till that period known no impulse beyond that of friendship; I had been an example of conjugal fidelity; but I had never known the perils to which the feeling heart is subjected, in an union of regard wholly uninfluenced by the affections of the soul.

"The second character which I played was Amanda, in 'A Trip to Scarbro.' The play was altered from Vanburgh's 'Relapse'; and the audience, supposing it was a new piece, on finding themselves deceived, expressed a considerable degree of disapprobation. I was terrified beyond imagination when Mrs. Yates, no longer able to bear the hissing of the audience, quitted the scene and left me alone to encounter the critic tempest. I stood for some moments as though I had been petrified: Mr. Sheridan, from the side wing, desired me not to quit the boards; the late Duke of Cumberland, from the stage-box, bade me take courage—'It is not you, but the play, they hiss,' said his Royal Highness. I curtsied; and that curtsey seemed to electrify the whole house; for a thundering peal of encouraging applause followed,—the comedy was suffered to go on, and is to this hour a stock play at Drury Lane Theatre.

"I often saw Mr. Sheridan, whose manner had lost nothing of its interesting attention. He continued to visit me very frequently, and always gave me the most friendly

counsel. He knew that I was not properly protected by Mr. Robinson, but he was too generous to build his gratification on the detraction of another. The happiest moments I then knew were passed in the society of this distinguished being. He saw me ill-bestowed upon a man who neither loved nor valued me; he lamented my destiny, but with such delicate propriety, that it consoled while it revealed to me the unhappiness of my situation.

"My popularity increasing every night that I appeared, my prospects, both of fame and affluence, began to brighten. We now hired the house which is situated between the Hummums and the Bedford Arms, Covent Garden: it had been built (I believe) by Doctor Fisher, who married the widow of the celebrated actor Powell: but Mr. Robinson took the premises of Mrs. Mattocks, of Covent Garden Theatre. The house was particularly convenient in every respect; but, above all on account of its vicinity to Drury Lane. Here I hoped to enjoy, at least, some cheerful days, as I found that my circle of friends increased almost hourly. In proportion as play obtained its influence over my husband's mind, his small degree of remaining regard for me visibly decayed. We now had horses, a phaeton and ponies; and my fashions in dress were followed with flattering avidity. My house was thronged with visitors, and my morning levees were crowded, so that I could scarcely find a quiet hour for study. Mr. Sheridan was still my most esteemed of friends. He advised me with the gentlest anxiety, and he warned me of the danger which expense would produce, and which might interrupt the rising progress of my dramatic reputation. Situated as I was at this time, the effort was difficult to avoid the society of Mr. Sheridan. He was manager of the theatre. I could not shun seeing and conversing with him, at rehearsals and behind the scenes: and his con-

versation was always such as to fascinate and charm me. The green-room was frequented by nobility and men of genius; among these were Mr. Fox and the Earl of Derby. I had then been married more than four years, my daughter Maria Elizabeth nearly three years old. I had been then seen, and known, at all public places from the age of fifteen; yet I knew as little of the world's deceptions as though I had been educated in the deserts of Siberia. I believed every woman friendly, every man sincere, till I discovered proofs that their characters were deceptive.

"I had now performed two seasons, in tragedy and comedy. The play of THE WINTER'S TALE was this season commanded by their majesties. I never had performed before the royal family; and the first character in which I was destined so to appear was that of PERDITA. I had frequently played the part, both with the Hermione of Mrs. Hartley and of Miss Farren; but I felt a strange degree of alarm when I found my name announced to perform it before the royal family.

"In the green-room I was rallied on the occasion; and Mr. Smith, whose gentlemanly manners and enlightened conversation rendered him an ornament to the profession, who performed the part of Leontes, laughingly exclaimed, 'By Jove, Mrs. Robinson, you will make a conquest of the Prince: for to-night you look handsomer than ever.' I smiled at the unmerited compliment; and little foresaw the vast variety of events that would arise from that night's exhibition!

"As I stood in the wing opposite the Prince's box, waiting to go on the stage, Mr. Ford, the manager's son, and now a respectable defender of the laws, presented a friend who accompanied him; this friend was Lord Viscount Malden, now Earl of Essex.

"We entered into conversation during a few minutes,

the Prince of Wales all the time observing us, and frequently speaking to Colonel (now *General*) Lake and to the Hon Mr. Legge, brother to Lord Lewisham, who was in waiting on his Royal Highness. I hurried through the first scene, not without much embarrassment, owing to the fixed attention with which the Prince of Wales honored me. Indeed, some flattering remarks which were made by his Royal Highness met my ear as I stood near his box, and I was overwhelmed with confusion.

"The Prince's particular attention was observed by every one, and I was again rallied at the end of the play. On the last curtsey, the royal family condescendingly returned a bow to the performers; but, just as the curtain was falling, my eyes met those of the Prince of Wales; and with a look that I *never shall forget*, he gently inclined his head a second time: I felt the compliment, and blushed my gratitude.

"During the entertainment, Lord Malden never ceased conversing with me! he was young, pleasing, and perfectly accomplished. He remarked the particular applause which the Prince had bestowed on my performance, said a thousand civil things, and detained me in conversation till the evening's performance was concluded.

"I was now going to my chair, which waited, when I met the royal family crossing the stage. I was again honored with a very marked and low bow from the Prince of Wales. On my return home, I had a party to supper; and the whole conversation centred in encomiums on the person, graces, and amiable manners of the illustrious heir-apparent.

"Within two or three days of this time, Lord Malden made me a morning visit: Mr. Robinson was not at home, and I received him rather awkwardly. But his Lordship's embarrassment far exceeded mine: he attempted to speak, paused, hesitated, apologized: I knew not why. He hoped

I would pardon him; that I would not mention something he had to communicate; that I would consider the peculiar delicacy of his situation, and then act as I thought proper. I could not comprehend his meaning, and therefore requested that he would be explicit.

"After some moments of evident rumination, he tremblingly drew a small letter from his pocket. I took it, and knew not what to say. It was addressed to PERDITA. I smiled, I believe, rather sarcastically, and opened the *billet*. It contained only a few words, but those expressive of more than common civility: they were signed, FLORIZEL.

"'Well, my Lord, and what does this mean?' said I, half angry.

"'Can you not guess the writer?' said Lord Malden.

"'Perhaps yourself, my Lord?' cried I, gravely.

"'Upon my honor, no,' said the Viscount. 'I should not have dared so to address you on so short an acquaintance.'

"I pressed him to tell me from whom the letter came. He again hesitated: he seemed confused and sorry that he had undertaken to deliver it. 'I hope that I shall not forfeit your good opinion,' said he, 'but——'

"'But what, my Lord?'

"'I could not refuse,—for the letter is from the Prince of Wales.'

"I was astonished: I confess that I was agitated; but I was also somewhat skeptical as to the truth of Lord Malden's assertion. I returned a formal and a doubtful answer; and his Lordship shortly after took his leave.

"A thousand times did I read this short but expressive letter; still I did not implicitly believe that it was written by the Prince: I rather considered it as an experiment made by Lord Malden either on my vanity or propriety of conduct. On the next evening the Viscount repeated his

visit: we had a card-party of six or seven, and the Prince of Wales was again the subject of unbounded panegyric. Lord Malden spoke of his Royal Highness's manners as the most polished and fascinating; of his temper, as the most engaging; and of his mind, the most replete with every amiable sentiment. I heard these praises, and my heart beat with conscious pride, while memory turned to the partial but delicately respectful letter which I had received on the preceding morning.

"The next day, Lord Malden brought me a second letter. He assured me that the Prince was most unhappy lest I should be offended at his conduct; and that he conjured me to go that night to the Oratorio, where he would by some signal convince me that he was the writer of the letters, supposing I was still skeptical as to their authenticity.

"I went to the Oratorio; and, on my taking my seat in the balcony box, the Prince almost instantaneously observed me. He held the printed bill before his face, and drew his hand across his forehead; still fixing his eyes on me. I was confused, and knew not what to do. My husband was with me, and I was fearful of his observing what passed. Still the Prince continued to make signs, such as moving his hand on the edge of the box as if writing, then speaking to the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburg) who also looked towards me with particular attention.

"I now observed one of the gentlemen in waiting bring the Prince a glass of water; before he raised it to his lips, he looked at me. So marked was his Royal Highness's conduct that many of the audience observed it: several persons in the pit directed their gaze at the place where I sat; and, on the following day, one of the diurnal prints observed that there was one passage in Dryden's Ode which seemed particularly interesting to the Prince of Wales, who

'Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sigh'd, and look'd, and sigh'd again.'

"However flattering it might have been, to female vanity, to know that the most admired and most accomplished Prince in Europe was devotedly attached to me; however dangerous to the heart such idolatry as his Royal Highness, during many months, professed in almost daily letters, which were conveyed to me by Lord Malden, still I declined any interview with his Royal Highness. I was not insensible to all his powers of attraction: I thought him one of the most amiable of men. There was a beautiful ingenuousness in his language, a warm and enthusiastic adoration expressed in every letter, which interested and charmed me. During the whole spring, till the theatre closed, this correspondence continued; every day giving me some new assurance of inviolable affection.

"After we had corresponded some months without ever speaking to each other (for I still declined meeting his Royal Highness, from a dread of the *éclat* which such a connection would produce, and the fear of injuring him in the opinion of his royal relatives) I received, through the hands of Lord Malden, the Prince's portrait in miniature painted by the late Mr. Meyer. This picture is now in my possession. Within the case was a small heart cut in paper, which I also have: on one side was written '*Je ne change qu'en mourant.*' On the other, '*Unalterable to my Perdita through life.*'

"During many months of confidential correspondence, I always offered his Royal Highness the best advice in my power; and disclaimed every sordid and interested thought. At every interview with Lord Malden, I perceived that he regretted the task he had undertaken; but he assured me that the Prince was almost frantic whenever he suggested

a wish to decline interfering. Once I remember his Lordship's telling me that the late Duke of Cumberland had made him a visit early in the morning, at his house in Clarges Street, informing him that the Prince was most wretched on my account, and imploring him to continue his services only a short time longer. The Prince's establishment was then in agitation: at this period his Royal Highness still resided in Buckingham House.

"A proposal was now made that I should meet his Royal Highness, at his apartments, in the disguise of male attire. I was accustomed to perform in that dress, and the Prince had seen me (I believe) in the character of the 'Irish Widow.' To this plan I decidedly objected. The indelicacy of such a step, as well as the danger of detection, made me shrink from the proposal. My refusal threw his Royal Highness into the most distressing agitation, as was expressed by the letter which I received on the following morning. Lord Malden again lamented that he had engaged himself in the intercourse; and declared that he had himself conceived so violent a passion for me that he was the most miserable and unfortunate of mortals.

"During this period, though Mr. Robinson was a stranger to my epistolary intercourse with the Prince, his conduct was entirely neglectful. He was perfectly careless respecting my fame and my repose. His indifference naturally produced an alienation of esteem on my side, and the increasing adoration of the most enchanting of mortals hourly reconciled my mind to the idea of a separation. The unbounded assurances of lasting affection which I received from his Royal Highness in many scores of the most eloquent letters, the contempt which I experienced from my husband, and the perpetual labor which I underwent for his support, at length began to weary my fortitude. Still

I was reluctant to become the theme of public animadversion; and still I remonstrated with my husband on the unkindness of his conduct."

It should be mentioned that these candid confessions were written at a period when her frailties had been condoned and she had found a number of friends and acquaintances of a respectable character, who felt that a weak and interesting woman had been deliberately made the victim of one of the most selfish and unprincipled of men. The unfortunate lady was quite dazzled by the tinsel charms of this sham Adonis, and seemed to find something more than mortal in the florid beauty of this most gross and selfish of admirers. Without officially extenuating her follies, this much may be said, that she is entitled to some indulgence on the ground of the neglect of the husband who should have protected her, and the persevering arts that were employed to ensnare her. A still more favorable extenuation was, that being of an unformed and romantic turn, it was artfully attempted to give a sentimental and comparatively innocent turn to the affair, and incidents of secrecy, disguise, mufflings, &c., were employed by the precocious lover, who had dubbed himself Florizel, and the finished scoundrel, Lord Malden, who acted as his agent in the affair. The loves of Florizel and Perdita sounded prettily in the newspapers, which in the obsequious jargon then fashionable spoke of one "whose manners were resistless and whose was victory."

At length "after many alternations of feeling," a meeting was arranged under circumstances of the most melodramatic character.

"Lord Malden and myself dined at the inn on the island between Kew and Brentford. We waited the signal for crossing the river, in a boat which had been engaged for the purpose. Heaven can witness how many conflicts

my agitated heart endured at this important moment! I admired the Prince; I felt grateful for his affection. *He was the most engaging of created beings.* I had corresponded with him during many months, and his eloquent letters, the exquisite sensibility which breathed through every line, his ardent professions of adoration, had combined to shake my feeble resolution. The handkerchief was waved on the opposite shore; but the signal was, by the dusk of the evening, rendered almost imperceptible. Lord Malden took my hand; I stepped into the boat, and in a few minutes we landed before the iron gates of old Kew Palace. The interview was but of a moment. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburg) were walking down the avenue. They hastened to meet us. A few words, and those scarcely articulate, were uttered by the Prince, when a noise of people approaching from the palace startled us. The moon was now rising; and the idea of being overheard, or of his Royal Highness being seen out at so unusual an hour, terrified the whole group. After a few more words of the most affectionate nature uttered by the Prince, we parted, and Lord Malden and myself returned to the island. The Prince never quitted the avenue, nor the presence of the Duke of York, during the whole of this short meeting. Alas! my friend, if my mind was before influenced by esteem, it was now awakened to the most enthusiastic admiration. The rank of the Prince no longer chilled into awe that being, who now considered him as the lover and the friend. *The graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, will be remembered by me* till every vision of this changing scene shall be forgotten.

"Many and frequent were the interviews which afterwards took place at this romantic spot: our walks some-

times continued till past midnight; the Duke of York and Lord Malden were always of the party; our conversation was composed of general topics. The Prince had, from his infancy, been wholly secluded, and naturally took much pleasure in conversing about the busy world, its manners and pursuits, characters and scenery. Nothing could be more delightful or more rational than our midnight perambulations. I always wore a dark-colored habit: the rest of our party generally wrapped themselves in great coats to disguise them, excepting the Duke of York, who almost universally alarmed us by the display of a buff coat, the most conspicuous color he could have selected for an adventure of this nature. The polished and fascinating ingenuousness of his Royal Highness's manners contributed not a little to enliven our promenades. He sang with exquisite taste; and the tones of his voice breaking on the silence of the night, have often *appeared to my entranced senses like more than mortal melody*. Often have I lamented the distance which destiny had placed between us: how would my soul have idolized such a *husband!* Alas! how often, in the ardent enthusiasm of my soul, have I formed the wish that being were *mine alone!* to whom partial millions were to look up for protection.

"The Duke of York was now on the eve of quitting the country for Hanover: the Prince was also on the point of receiving his first establishment; and the apprehension that this attachment might injure his Royal Highness, in the opinion of the world, rendered the caution, which was invariably observed, of the utmost importance. A considerable time elapsed in these delightful scenes of visionary happiness. The Prince's attachment seemed to increase daily, and I considered myself as the most blest of human beings. During some time, we had enjoyed our meetings in the neighborhood of Kew; and I now looked forward

to the adjusting of his Royal Highness's establishment for the public avowal of our mutual attachment.

"I had relinquished my profession. The last night of my appearance on the stage, I represented the character of Sir Harry Revel, in the comedy of 'The Miniature Picture,' written by Lady Craven;* and 'The Irish Widow.' On entering the green-room, I informed Mr. Moody, who played in the farce, that I should appear no more after that night; and, endeavoring to smile while I sang, I repeated,

'Oh joy to you all in full measure,
So wishes and prays Widow Brady!'

which were the last lines of my song in 'The Irish Widow.' This effort to conceal the emotion I felt, on quitting a profession I enthusiastically loved, was of short duration; and I burst into tears on my appearance. My regret, at recollecting that I was treading for the last time the boards where I had so often received the most gratifying testimonies of the public approbation, where mental exertion had been emboldened by private worth, that I was flying from a happy certainty, perhaps to pursue the phantom disappointment, nearly overwhelmed my faculties, and for some time deprived me of the power of articulation. Fortunately, the person on the stage with me had to begin the scene, which allowed me time to collect myself. I went, however, mechanically dull through the business of the evening; and, notwithstanding the cheering expressions and applause of the audience, I was several times near fainting.

"The daily prints now indulged the malice of my enemies by the most scandalous paragraphs respecting the

* Now Margravine of Anspach.

Prince of Wales and myself. I found it was too late to stop the hourly augmenting torrent of abuse that was poured upon me from all quarters. Whenever I appeared in public, I was overwhelmed by the gazing of the multitude. I was frequently obliged to quit Ranelagh, owing to the crowd which staring curiosity had assembled round my box; and, even in the streets of the metropolis, I scarcely ventured to enter a shop without experiencing the greatest inconvenience. Many hours have I waited till the crowd dispersed which surrounded my carriage in expectation of my quitting the shop. I cannot suppress a smile at the absurdity of such proceeding, when I remember that, during nearly three seasons I was almost every night upon the stage, and that I had then been nearly five years with Mr. Robinson at every fashionable place of entertainment. But, thank Heaven! my heart was not formed in the mould of callous effrontery. I shuddered at the gulf before me, and felt small gratification in the knowledge of having taken a step which many, who condemned, would have been no less willing to imitate, had they been placed in the same situation."

In this sort of Della Cruscan dream the unfortunate lady was living, forming perspectives of yet more delightful visions beyond. But she did not know of what was a specially disagreeable feature in the character of one who was to be the future first gentleman in Europe. An almost invariable portion of his programme in such *affaires de cœur* was a sudden desertion, as abrupt as his advances had been gradual and impassioned. Full of anticipations the most romantic, and shutting her eyes to all consequences, the deceived lady had taken her leave of the stage.

"The period now approached that was to destroy all the fairy visions which had filled my mind with dreams of happiness. At the moment when everything was preparing

for his Royal Highness's establishment, when I looked impatiently for the arrival of that day on which I might behold my adored friend gracefully receiving the acclamations of his future subjects, when I might enjoy the public protection of that being for whom I gave up all, I received a letter from his Royal Highness, a cold and unkind letter—briefly informing me that '*we must meet no more!*'

"And now, suffer me to call GOD to witness, that I was unconscious why this decision had taken place in his Highness's mind: only two days previous to this letter being written I had seen the Prince at Kew, and his affection appeared to be boundless as it was undiminished.

"Amazed, afflicted beyond the power of utterance, I wrote immediately to his Royal Highness and required an explanation. He remained silent. Again I wrote, but received no elucidation of this most cruel and extraordinary mystery. The Prince was then at Windsor. I set out in a small pony phaeton, wretched, and unaccompanied by any one except my postillion (a child of nine years of age). It was nearly dark when we quitted Hyde Park Corner. On my arrival at Hounslow, the innkeeper informed me that every carriage which had passed the heath for the last ten nights had been attacked and rifled. I confess the idea of personal danger had no terrors for my mind, in the state it then was; and the possibility of annihilation, divested of the crime of suicide, encouraged rather than diminished my determination of proceeding. We had scarcely reached the middle of the heath when my horses were startled by the sudden appearance of a man, rushing from the side of the road. The boy on perceiving him instantly spurred his pony, and, by a sudden bound of our light vehicle, the ruffian missed his grasp at the front rein. We now proceeded at full speed, while the footpad ran, endeavoring to overtake us. At length, my horses fortunately outrunning

the perseverance of the assailant, we, at last, reached the Magpie, a small inn on the heath, in safety. The alarm which, in spite of my resolution, this adventure had created, was augmented on my recollecting for the first time, that I had then in my black stock a brilliant stud of very considerable value, which could only have been possessed by the robber by strangling the wearer.

"If my heart palpitated with joy at my escape from assassination, a circumstance soon after occurred that did not tend to quiet my emotion. This was the appearance of Mr. H. Meynel and Mrs. A——. My foreboding soul instantly beheld a rival, and, with jealous eagerness, interpreted the hitherto inexplicable conduct of the Prince, from his having frequently expressed his wish to know that lady.

"On my arrival, the Prince would not see me. My agonies were now indescribable. I consulted with Lord Malden and the Duke of Dorset, whose honorable mind and truly disinterested friendship had, on many occasions, been exemplified towards me. They were both at a loss to divine any cause of this sudden change in the Prince's feelings. The Prince of Wales had hitherto assiduously sought opportunities to distinguish me more publicly than was prudent, in his Royal Highness's situation. This was in the month of August. On the fourth of the preceding June, I went, by his desire, into the Chamberlain's box at the birth-night ball: the distressing observation of the circle was drawn towards the part of the box in which I sat, by the marked and injudicious attentions of his Royal Highness. I had not been arrived many minutes before I witnessed a singular species of fashionable coquetry. Previous to his Highness's beginning his minuet, I perceived a woman of high rank select from the bouquet she wore, two rosebuds, which she gave to the Prince, as he after-

wards informed me, 'emblematical of herself and him:' I observed his Royal Highness immediately beckon to a nobleman, who has since formed a part of his establishment, and, looking most earnestly at me, whisper a few words, at the same time presenting to him his newly acquired trophy. In a few moments Lord C. entered the Chamberlain's box, and giving the rosebuds into my hands, informed me that he was commissioned by the Prince to do so. I placed them in my bosom, and, I confess, felt proud of the power by which I thus publicly mortified an exalted rival. His Royal Highness now avowedly distinguished me at all public places of entertainment; at the King's hunt, near Windsor, at the reviews, and at the theatres. The Prince only seemed happy in evincing his affection towards me.

"How terrible then was the change to my feelings! And I again most SOLEMNLY REPEAT, that I was totally ignorant of any JUST CAUSE for so sudden an alteration.

"My 'good-natured friends' now carefully informed me of the multitude of secret enemies who were ever employed in estranging the Prince's mind from me. So fascinating, so illustrious a lover could not fail to excite the envy of my own sex. Women of all descriptions were emulous of attracting his Royal Highness's attention. Alas! I had neither rank nor power to oppose such adversaries. Every engine of female malice was set in motion to destroy my repose; and every petty calumny was repeated with tenfold embellishments. Tales of the most infamous and glaring falsehood were invented; and I was again assailed by pamphlets, by paragraphs, by caricatures, and all the artillery of slander, while the only being to whom I then looked up for protection was so situated as to be unable to afford it. In the anguish of my soul, I once more addressed the Prince of Wales. I complained, perhaps too

vehemently, of his injustice; and of the calumnies which had been by my enemies fabricated against me, of the falsehood of which he was but too sensible. I conjured him to render me justice. He did so: he wrote me a most eloquent letter, disclaiming the causes alleged by a calumniating world, and fully acquitting me of the charges which had been propagated to destroy me.

"I resided now in Cork Street, Burlington Gardens. The house, which was neat, but by no means splendid, had recently been fitted up for the reception of the Countess of Derby, on her separation from her lord. My situation now every hour became more irksome. The Prince still unkindly persisted in withdrawing himself from my society. I was now deeply involved in debt, which I despaired of ever having the power to discharge. I had quitted both my husband and my profession;—the retrospect was dreadful!

"My estrangement from the Prince was now the theme of public animadversion; while the newly invigorated shafts of my old enemies, the daily prints, were again hurled upon my defenceless head, with tenfold fury. The regrets of Mr. Robinson, now that he had *lost* me, became insupportable;—he constantly wrote to me in the language of unbounded affection; nor did he fail, when we met, to express his agony at our separation, and even a wish for our re-union.

"I had, at one period, resolved on returning to my profession; but some friends whom I consulted dreaded that the public would not suffer my reappearance on the stage. This idea intimidated me, and precluded my efforts for that independence of which my romantic credulity had robbed me. I was fatally induced to relinquish what would have proved an ample and honorable resource for myself and my child. My debts accumulated to near seven

thousand pounds. My creditors, whose insulting illiberality could only be equaled by their unbounded impositions, hourly assailed me.

"I was, in the mean time, wholly neglected by the Prince, while the assiduities of Lord Malden daily increased. I had no other friend on whom I could rely for assistance or protection. When I say protection, I would not be understood to mean *pecuniary* assistance—Lord Malden being, at the time alluded to, even poorer than myself: the death of his Lordship's grandmother, Lady Frances Coningsby, had not then placed him above the penury of his own small income.

"Lord Malden's attention to me again exposed him to all the humiliation of former periods. The Prince assured me once more of his wishes to renew our former friendship and affection, and urged me to meet him at the house of Lord Malden in Clarges Street. I was at this period little less than frantic, deeply involved in debt, persecuted by my enemies, and perpetually reproached by my relations. I would joyfully have resigned an existence now become to me an intolerable burden; yet my pride was not less than my sorrow, and I resolved, whatever my heart might suffer, to wear a placid countenance when I met the inquiring glances of my triumphant enemies.

"After much hesitation, by the advice of Lord Malden, I consented to meet his Royal Highness. He accosted me with every appearance of tender attachment, declaring that he had never for one moment ceased to love me—but, that I had many concealed enemies, who were exerting every effort to undermine me. We passed some hours in the most friendly and delightful conversation, and I began to flatter myself that all our differences were adjusted. But what words can express my surprise and chagrin when, on meeting his Royal Highness *the very next day* in Hyde Park,

he turned his head to avoid seeing me, and even affected *not to know me!*

"Overwhelmed by this blow, my distress knew no limits. Yet Heaven can witness the truth of my assertion, even in this moment of complete despair, when oppression bowed me to the earth, I blamed not the Prince. I did then, and ever shall consider his mind as nobly and honorably organized! nor could I teach myself to believe that a heart, the seat of so many virtues, could possibly become inhuman and unjust."

There was some "secret history" connected with this affair, and it turned out that the sacrifice of the unhappy lady had been found profitable to the two parties which were then at war—the Court and the Prince. A reconciliation was affected, and the Prince was delighted to pay a cheap tribute to public decorum by resigning what he no longer cared to keep, and receiving as his reward that "establishment," and adjustment which had formed such a brilliant vista in the poor lady's dreams.*

Though the magnanimous Prince was to benefit so handsomely by his sacrifice, his intention apparently was that this disagreeable affair should be closed with the smallest expense conceivable. No answer was given to the lady's letters. She had abandoned her profession, and had been cast off by her husband. Fortunately she held a bond of her royal admirer's for twenty thousand pounds payable on his "establishment." All such august securities are of little value, save as instruments of negotiation and compromise—it being almost impossible to enforce their payment. Armed with this document, her friends now interfered, and after much discreditable haggling it was felt that some settlement could not be refused with decency. Mr.

* See Letters of George the Third to Lord North.

Fox undertook the office of arbitrator, and decided that the bond should be given up in consideration of an annuity of five hundred a year. Thus prosaically ended the history of Florizel and Perdita.

The rest of her life offered but little interest. The harsh treatment she had met with excited sympathy, and found her some friends of a reputable class. She was privileged to sustain the rôle of a heroine "that had suffered"—and, owing to a tone then fashionable in society and encouraged by the Press, awakened a fresh interest by becoming a disciple of the sentimental school of which Mr. Merry was chief professor. This taste was chiefly manifested in feeble verses—known as "Poems"—which were thrown off on any occasion that was suitably romantic. Thus it was rumored in the papers that in the winter of 1790 "Mrs. Robinson had entered into a poetical correspondence with Mr. Robert Merry under the fictitious names of 'Laura' and 'Laura Maria'—Mr. Merry assuming the title of 'Della Crusca.'" One result of which graceful interchange of sentiment was a work described as "a quarto Poem"—and entitled 'Ainsi va le Monde.' It contained three hundred and fifty lines, yet it was "written in twelve hours, as a reply to Mr. Merry's '*Laurel of Liberty*,' which had been sent to Mrs. Robinson on a Saturday: on the Tuesday following the answer was composed and given to the public."—The subjects that inspired her muse illustrate very happily the character of the "sentiment" of that day which is scarcely intelligible to our own generation. In such soft communings the Sewards, Pratts, Hayleys, and others wasted many profitable hours, and much good ink.

The heroine did not, however, content herself with these *dilettante* exercises, and it is to be feared did not limit herself to the character of "a fair Platonist," as the newspapers of her day might have styled her. She repaired to

foreign climes, where her rather frivolous nature was gratified by homage and attentions of a more doubtful kind.*

During the expedition thus alluded to she entirely lost the use of her limbs, and in spite of every remedy remained almost a cripple for the rest of her life. She was but twenty-four when this affliction befell her. She tried the baths of Aix-la-Chapelle, where, we are assured, "a dawn of comparative tranquillity soothed her spirits." Finding all these attempts useless, she resigned herself to what she was obliged to endure—and during the rest of her life devoted herself to what was called "literary labor," *i.e.*, to the composition of indescribably vapid "Poems" on her own blighted affections, on the death of her father and mother, and which her biographer moderately commends as "not worse than other effusions of the same class." A long course of ill health at last ended in disease and death. She wished to return to her birthplace, and die there, but even this sad solace was denied to her, from a want of the pecuniary means for its execution. In vain she applied to those on whom honor, humanity, and justice gave her undoubted claims. She even condescended

* Her biographer, approaching this part of her career, has delicately relegated to a note what really ought to have found an official place in a regular account of her life. And the passage is worth considering, as a specimen of that valet-like style in which it was then customary to dwell on the trespasses of the noble and the fashionable. "An attachment took place between Mrs. Robinson and Colonel Tarleton, shortly after the return of the latter from America, which subsisted during sixteen years. *On the circumstances which occasioned its dissolution, it is neither necessary, nor would it be proper to dwell.* The exertions of Mrs. Robinson in the service of Col. Tarleton, when pressed by pecuniary embarrassment, led to that unfortunate journey, the consequences of which proved so fatal to her health. The Colonel accompanied her to the Continent; and, by his affectionate attentions, sought to alleviate those sufferings of which he had been the involuntary occasion.

to entreat, as a *donation*, the return of those sums granted as *a loan* in her prosperity.

The following is a copy of a letter addressed, on this occasion, to a *noble* debtor, and found among the papers of Mrs. Robinson after her decease:—

"April 23, 1800.

"My Lord,—Pronounced by my physicians to be in a rapid decline, I trust that your Lordship will have the goodness to assist me with a part of the sum for which you are indebted to me. Without your aid I cannot make trial of the Bristol waters, the *only* remedy that presents to me any hope of preserving my existence. I should be sorry to *die* at enmity with any person; and you may be assured, my dear Lord, that I bear none towards you. It would be useless to ask you to call on me; but, if you would do me that honor, I should be happy, *very happy*, to see you, being,

"My dear Lord, yours truly,
"Mary Robinson."

To this letter no answer was returned! Further comments are unnecessary.

"Her disorder rapidly drawing towards a period, the accumulation of water upon her chest every moment threatened suffocation. For nearly fifteen nights and days she was obliged to be supported upon pillows, or in the arms of her young and affectionate nurses. Her decease, through this period, was hourly expected. On the twenty-first of December, she inquired how near was Christmas Day. Being answered, Within a few days—'*Yet*,' said she, 'I shall never see it.' The remainder of this melancholy day passed in indescribable tortures. Towards midnight, the sufferer exclaimed, 'Oh God, oh just and merciful God, help me to support this agony!' The whole of the ensuing

day she continued to endure great anguish. In the evening, a kind of lethargic stupor came on. Miss Robinson, approaching the pillow of her expiring mother, earnestly conjured her to speak if in her power. '*My darling Mary!*' she faintly articulated, and *spoke no more*. In another hour she became insensible to the grief of those by whom she was surrounded, and breathed her last at a quarter past twelve on the following noon."

Thus ended the career of this unhappy lady. In harmony with the cynical truth of the unnoticed appeal to the noble lord which was in keeping with the gracious manners of the Prince's Court, is Miss Hawkins's unsparing sketch: "She was unquestionably very beautiful, but more so in the face than in the figure; and as she proceeded in her course she acquired a remarkable facility in adapting her deportment to her dress. When she was to be seen daily in St. James's Street or Pall Mall, even in her chariot, the variation was striking. To-day she was a *paysanne*, with her straw hat tied at the back of her head, looking as if too new to what she passed to know what she looked at. Yesterday, perhaps, she had been the dressed belle of Hyde Park, trimmed, powdered, patched, painted to the utmost power of rouge and white lead; to-morrow she would be the cravated Amazon of the riding-house; but be she what she might, the hats of the fashionable promenaders swept the ground as she passed. But in her outset 'the style' was a high phaeton, in which she was driven by the favored of the day. Three candidates and her husband were outriders: and this in the face of the congregations turning out of places of worship. . . . About the year 1778 she appeared on the stage, and gained, from the character in which she charmed, the name of *Perdita*. She then started in one of the new streets of Marylebone, and was in her altitude. Afterwards, when a little in the wane, she resided

under protection in Berkeley Square, and appeared to guests as mistress of the house as well as of its master. Her manners and conversation were said by those invited to want refinement. . . . I saw her on one day handed to her outrageously extravagant *vis-à-vis* by a man whom she pursued with a doting passion; all was still externally brilliant; she was fine and fashionable and the men of the day in Bond Street still pirouetted as her carriage passed them: the next day the vehicle was reclaimed by the maker; the Adonis whom she courted fled her: she followed—all to no purpose. She then took up a new life in London, became literary. . . . What was the next glimpse? On a table in one of the waiting-rooms of the Opera House was seated a woman of fashionable appearance, still beautiful, 'but not in the bloom of beauty's pride;' she was not noticed except by the eye of pity. In a few minutes two liveried servants came to her, and they took from their pockets long white sleeves, which they drew on their arms; they then lifted her up and conveyed her to her carriage—it was the then helpless, paralytic *Perdita!*"

## CHAPTER XI.

### GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE.

George Frederick Cooke,* in spite of all his rudeness and irregularities, is a figure on which the eye rests with a curious interest. There was an originality and piquancy in the various bursts of his extravagance which was quite dramatic, and diverting in the highest degree:

* Born 1756, died 1812.

so much so that the sober Cooke is almost uninteresting compared with his intoxicated self. In that condition he became grotesque, brutal, mock-heroic, and even witty—his sarcasm was withering, so that the victim of his humor was, from self-respect, compelled to deal with him as a sober being. Beside this odd reputation, his theatrical character seems comparatively tame and faded. There are grand traditions of his power and fierce energies in such parts as Richard and Sir Giles Overreach, and his genius seems to have been of the same surging and tempestuous quality as Edmund Kean's; but the peculiar features of his style do not stand out very distinctly. All the adventures and outbursts of "GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE"—for he and his friends delighted in the ring of these words, and would not have abated one of the three names—have a flavor of their own, and are still retailed with *goût* by old actors. There are stories of his quarrelsomeness, of his sardonic raillery when in his cups, and, above all, of his moody jealousy against what he considered the "priggish" superiority of Kemble, whom he considered his inferior in genius, though more artful and decorous. On these grounds, therefore, because he was a thoroughly genuine character, recklessly sacrificing himself sooner than pay the homage usually offered by irregularity to decency, he really stands apart from the rest of his profession, a Bohemian as it is called, and a not unpicturesque figure.

This bitterness, combined with a haughtiness worthy of a Spanish hidalgo, might have received some indulgence, as it seems to have been founded on a sense of humiliation and the consciousness that his infirmities had placed him below men to whom he was superior. He always appeared to feel that he had committed his reputation, and could not hope to retrieve himself: and therefore took refuge in a quarrelsome sensitiveness, which was yet not without dig-

nity. A history might almost be written of his strange freaks of drunkenness, and in such a record a special study of the humors of George Frederick Cooke would have to be made. The sudden turn from good-nature and affection to hostility was the most familiar shape of his humor: and in this mood he may be most characteristically introduced.

"Mr. Cooper, the American tragedian," says Mr. Mathews, "had been performing a series of characters at Drury Lane Theatre; and being extremely intimate with Cooke, it occurred to him that his performance with him in 'Othello' on his benefit night would be a great attraction, if Mr. Harris's permission could be obtained. Cooke, who, in his natural character, was one of the kindest of men, instantly undertook to apply to Mr. Harris, giving Cooper some hope of success.

"Mr. Harris resided at this period at Belmont, near Uxbridge, where one afternoon Mr. Cooke was announced. The weather was intensely severe, and the visit augured some pressing cause; for Cooke seldom called but to make some request, generally difficult to be reconciled or granted. Still on the present occasion, Mr. Harris was 'very happy to see Mr. Cooke,' and 'hoped he came to stay dinner;' which hope was unnoticed by the actor, who nervously proceeded to break the unreasonable nature of his visit, and he began in broken accents to explain his errand: 'My *dear* sir!—Cooper—the best creature in the world—been acting at Drury Lane—going to take a benefit—Othello—Iago—bring him a great house. In fine, *would* Mr. Harris allow him (Cooke) to perform the character of Iago for his friend on his benefit night?'

"Mr. Harris looked very blank at this certainly unfair demand upon his self-interest. He shook his head ominously, and gravely asked Mr. Cooke whether he did not think it *rather* more than he ought to grant, considering

the vast importance of his exclusive services. These and other arguments were mildly but determinately combated by Cooke in his best and most gentlemanlike manner; for 'Cooper, the best creature in the world,' was to be served; and Mr. Harris being at length overcome, Cooke's heart and eyes overflowed with generous delight and gratitude for the power thus afforded him to benefit a friend. Mr. Harris now reminded him of the dinner; but Cooke declined the invitation. 'No—he would take a crust, and *one* glass of wine to warm him, and then return to town.' After a polite struggle, Mr. Harris yielded to his visitor's determination; and a tray was produced, accompanied by a bottle of Madeira. Of this Cooke sipped and sipped with the most imperturbable self-complacency, until he nearly finished the bottle; when, by his master's order, the butler brought in another, of which Cooke had swallowed a few glasses, when a sudden recollection operated upon his mind, as Mr. Harris made some remark upon the increasing severity of the weather. Cooke, a little '*warmed*' by the wine he had taken, now bethought himself of a circumstance which his fervor for his friend's interest and the Madeira had together totally obliterated for the time, for he arose abruptly, and taking Mr. Harris's hand, broke to him this new matter: 'My *dear sir*, your goodness so overpowered all other recollections, that it made me entirely forget that I left my friend, dear Cooper, the best creature in the world, at the gate when I came in. Let me send for him, to thank you for your generous permission in his favor.'

"Mr. Harris was in much distress, and in spite of Cooke's assuring him that 'dear Cooper' would not mind it, he being 'the best creature in the world,' rang the bell, and desired the servant to request Mr. Cooper's company within doors. By this time the Madeira might be said to

have *warmed* Mr. Cooke more than half through; the second bottle was rapidly diminishing, and he was full of feelings generous as the wine. Again and again he clasped his liberal manager's hands in thankfulness for his kindness, reiterating, 'My *dear sir*, you're *too good* to me! I can never repay such friendly treatment; I'm bound to you eternally,' &c., &c.

"Mr. Harris apologized to Mr. Cooper, and explained the cause of his tardy invitation, placing a chair for him near the fire. Cooke, without noticing him, continued his maudlin praise of his host's hospitality and goodness; afterwards informing Cooper of his having given consent to the performance in question; for which favor Mr. Cooper also expressed, as well as his shivering state would permit, his thanks, and, at the recommendation of Mr. Harris, accepted a glass of Madeira, in order to thaw his congealed faculties. Cooke was now all hilarity and happiness. Another bottle was suggested, and promptly supplied; and immediately the servant returned to announce the dinner, to which Mr. Harris again pressed Cooke and invited Cooper. Mr. Cooke, however, would not hear of it. He *must*, he said, return to town to dinner, and 'dear Cooper' *must* accompany him; and he insisted upon Mr. Harris leaving him and the 'best creature in the world' together in the library, where they would take 'just *one* glass more, and then depart.' During dinner, Mr. Harris related the occasion of Mr. Cooke's visit; and in the course of the time, happened to inquire of the servants whether the gentlemen were gone. He was answered in the negative, and informed that Mr. Cooke had called for more wine, and that Mr. Cooper had vainly pressed him to depart. At this moment, a guest inquired whether Mr. Cooke performed that night, which question made Mr. Harris start from his chair in sudden alarm, exclaiming, 'Is this Wed-

nesday? He *does* play! What is it o'clock?' at the same time taking out his watch in great agitation, he exclaimed, 'Take away the wine; don't let him drink *a drop* more! He must go away *directly*, or I shall have the theatre pulled down. He is advertised for "Richard the Third," and he can barely get back in time to dress!'

"Back rushed the agitated proprietor to the library, where he found Cooper using every argument in his power to dissuade his indiscreet friend from drinking any more. But Cooke had already put too much of the enemy into his mouth not to be completely minus of brains, and, as usual under such privation, was utterly irrational and impersuasible.

"'Do you forget,' urged the unfortunate proprietor, 'that this is a play-night, Mr. Cooke? Even now you are expected in town. I entreat you will go without further delay, or you will be too late.'

"Cooke, in what he meant to be a most insinuating tone of voice, *blessed* his 'excellent friend;' again lauded his liberality and kindness, which he declared could never be forgotten or repaid by the devotion of his whole life, and finally begged the additional favor of *one* more bottle of his Madeira for himself and 'dear Cooper,' who, he repeated for the twentieth time, was 'the best creature in the world.' To this request Mr. Harris gave a positive and concise negative, placing before Mr. Cooke's view the danger he was hazarding by delay, and rendering himself unfit for his evening's duty. All was in vain; for Cooke, though equally civil, was also determined, and again and again coaxingly urged his request for *one* more bottle. At length, finding Mr. Harris inflexible, the Madeira he *had* drunk began to proclaim the indignation it had engendered in Mr. Cooke's grateful bosom; and as the liquor fermented, it raised the recipient up to a state of inflation

which threatened to burst all bounds, and he now assailed his host with the most opprobrious epithets; so that eventually, by the potency of 'the drink,' his late 'excellent friend,' Mr. Harris, was converted into a 'vulgar, old, soap-boiling scoundrel,' who did not know how treat a *gentleman* when one condescended to visit him; and Mr. Harris was imperiously asked, '*Do you know who I am, sir? Am I not George Frederick Cooke?*—without whose talents you would be confined to your own grease-tub; and who will never more darken your inhospitable doors while he lives, nor uphold your contemptible theatre any longer after this night!' And with many other threats and delicate innuendoes in relation to Mr. Harris's soap-boiling pursuits not herein set down, he staggered out of the room with the assistance of the 'best creature in the world,' whom he now distinguished by every ill name that drunkenness could remember or invent, for daring to direct or control *him, George Frederick Cooke!* when the great tragedian reeled into the attendant chaise, and was driven to town with his grieved and much-abused friend, 'dear Cooper!'

"'That night the audience did *not* mistake 'the drunkard for a god,' for the great 'George Frederick Cooke' was hissed off the stage, and obliged to leave his performance unfinished; and it was some time ere 'Richard was himself again.'"

The result of such afternoon excesses was that most degrading of all spectacles, the exhibition of an actor on the stage, who is scarcely able to articulate or indeed to support himself. The curious contrast between what a vast audience comes to witness—intellect in its highest and most finished development, and what *is* presented, viz., intellect in its lowest and most bestial condition, produces a sort of surprise and disgust which is almost dramatic. The ordinary victims of this failing may at least shrink

from the public gaze, but it is an additional penalty for the actor of talent who is thus afflicted that, in spite of all his efforts his halting figure, his thick and rambling speeches must betray to the crowd that he is unfit to appear before them, and that he is only insulting them by his incoherent attempts. Silence and perhaps pity may accept such lapses, but presently comes indignation, contempt, and open jeering: while the less reputable part of the audience welcomes the exhibition as the most amusing part of the performance. What a picture of degradation is conveyed by the following scene:

On one occasion, having vainly attempted to recall the beginning of Richard's first speech, he tottered forward with a cunning and maudlin intent to divert the resentment of the audience into a false channel: and laying his hand impressively upon his chest to insinuate that illness was the only cause of his failure, he with upturned mournful eyes solicited the sympathies of his audience and hiccupped out —"My old complaint!" A storm of hisses mingled with derisive merriment drove him off the stage.

Yet, as it must be owned, there was always a certain tragic dignity about his fits, which almost awed. Thus when he had been staggering about the Liverpool stage, scarcely able to articulate, a burst of hisses restored him to some coherence. He turned at bay and awed them with his fierce eyes.

"What! do you hiss me—*me*, George Frederick Cooke? *You contemptible money-getters.* You shall never again have *the honor* of hissing me! Farewell, I banish *you*." Then after a pause added, "*There's not a brick in your dirty town but what is cemented by the blood of a negro.*" They were cowed by this savage rebuke, and it must be said there is a certain rude grandeur in the rebuke. There is another scene that is really piquant, which exhibits him in his most

characteristic mood. He had been invited by a theatrical architect to dine, who was at a loss for a suitable person to invite to meet him. At last he pitched upon Mr. Brandon, the well-known manager of the front of the house at Covent Garden. The party was pleasant, but as usual Mr. Cooke began to drink deep, and gave promise of sitting on until far into the morning. The host, anxious to be rid of him before his dangerous mood came, dismissed him in plain terms, and took a candle to light him downstairs. When they were at the door the tragedian, who had accepted his *congé* in silence, suddenly seized his host *by his ears*, and shouted disdainfully, "Have I, George Frederick Cooke, degraded myself by dining *with bricklayers* to meet box-keepers!" and flinging him to the ground took his departure.

This strange being had married a lady of the name of Miss Daniells, and, it may be conceived, the lady led a troubled life. It was natural that his drunken humors, as regards her, should take the shape of ferocious jealousy, under which influence he at last locked her up in a high garret, and, taking the key with him, went off on one of his long debauches. He forgot all about her, and the poor woman was nearly starved. Her cries at last attracted the attention of the street, and she was released by means of a ladder. On this treatment she procured a separation.

There is another story also significant of that almost ferocious character which, as it were, lay concealed behind his nature until called into being by drink. When drinking at some low tavern he had got into a quarrel with a soldier, and insisted that his antagonist should fight him. The fellow made some excuses—among others that Cooke was a rich man, and had the advantage of him. Cooke pulled out a bundle of notes from his pocket, flung them on the fire, and kept them there with the poker until consumed;

and, after they were consumed, said, "There goes every penny I have in the world. Now, sir, you *shall* fight me!"

The late Mr. Mathews used to describe an amusing evening which, when a beginner, he was privileged to spend with the great tragedian. The latter invited the novice into his room to supper. This was irresistible; and the invitation was promptly accepted.

"During the early part of the night the host was a most charming companion. He feelingly entered into the young man's (Charles Mathews) embarrassing situation, and offered to frank him home if he would consent to return to his respectable family, and give up the uncertain result of the trial he was making as an actor, but without any effect upon the aspiring candidate for dramatic fame.

"After supper, whisky punch, which was a novelty to Cooke, who had never before been in Ireland, was introduced, and he evidently was quite fascinated with the pleasing beverage. He grew gradually more animated in its praise; declared, as he sipped and sipped, that there was nothing like it! it was the nectar of the gods! His spirits increased in animation; and jug after jug was brought in. The young man had very early cried, 'Hold! enough!' Cooke, however, knew not satiety when once the brimming cup had been emptied. Mrs. Byrne, the landlady, up to a certain time, felt bound, both by duty and interest, to supply her distinguished lodger with what he called for; but at last, the night growing old, and her eyes not growing young, she felt disposed to give them rest; and, entering with the sixth jug, inquired respectfully, 'whether Mister Cooke would want anything more?' At this moment her lodger was warmed up into the most contented of beings. He glanced at the capacious vessel just replaced upon his table, and, believing its contents sufficient, exclaimed, 'Nothing more, my *good* Mrs. Byrne, nothing

more.' Mrs. Byrne wished her two lodgers a good-night, and retired. Cooke refilled his glass, and being somewhat sentimental, advised—admonished his young friend; above all, cautioned him to be industrious in his profession, sober in private, and not to allow company,—'villainous company,'—to be the ruin of his youth. And thus he lectured on sobriety, till glass after glass vanished, and with it the reality of the virtue he so eloquently recommended. At last the jug was again empty. Mr. Mathews rose to go. 'You sha'n't stir; we'll have another *croosken lawn*, my dear fellow, and then you shall go to bed. I have much more to say to you, my good boy. Sit down. You don't know me. The world don't know me. Many an hour that they suppose I have wasted in drinking, I have devoted to the study of my profession;—the Passions and all their variations; their nice and imperceptible gradations. You shall see me delineate the Passions of the human mind.'

"The power of the whisky punch, however, acted in diametric opposition to the intent on his strong and flexible features, and only produced contortions and distortions, of which he was unconscious. He, nevertheless, endeavored to illustrate the passions, while his visitor was to guess them. 'What's the meaning of that, eh?' said the tragedian, with a most inexplicable twist of his face. 'Sir!' said the timid spectator, puzzled what to call it. Cooke reiterated 'What's the meaning of *that?* What passion does it express? Does it not strike you at once? There! What's that?' While he to whom he appealed could only say, '*Very fine*, sir!'—'But,' persisted Cooke, 'what *is* it?' He was then answered, 'Oh! I see, sir: *Anger!* to be sure!'—'To be sure you're a blockhead!' said Cooke, showing him the genuine expression of what he imputed to him before. 'Fear, sir! it was *Fear!* Now, then—what is *that?*'—'Oh, sir, *that*, I think, is

meant for *Jealousy.*' Again the *passionate* man declared that the *guesser* was wrong. '*Jealousy!* Pooh, man! *Sympathy!* You're very dull, sir.—Now I will express a passion that you *can't* mistake. There! what's that? Look again, sir!' he exclaimed, in a terrific voice; and he then made up a hideous face, compounded of malignity and the leering of a drunken satyr, which he *insisted* upon being guessed; and his visitor, trembling for the consequences of another mistake, hesitatingly pronounced it to be, '*Revenge!*'—'Despite o'erwhelm thee!' cried Cooke, in his most tragic rage. 'Revenge! Curse your stupidity! That was *Love!* Love, you insensible idiot! Can't you see it is Love?' Here he attempted the same expression, in order to strike conviction of its truth; when a mixture of comicality with the first effect so surprised the risible muscles of the young man, that he laughed outright. This infuriated the delineator of the Passions almost to madness. 'What, sir! does it make you laugh? Am I not George Frederick Cooke? born to command ten thousand slaves like thee! while you'll never get salt to your porridge, as an actor. *Who am I, sir?*'—curving his arms just as if preparing to make a minuet bow (his well-known attitude when *dignified*).

"'I beg your pardon, sir; the whisky punch has stupefied me.' Cooke accepted the excuse. 'True, true, '*tis out*' (his guest wished he was out too). 'Mistress Byrne, my love, another jug!' At this his companion made an attempt to go away, when he was forcibly dragged back with 'Stir not, on your life! The man that stirs makes me his foe. Another jug, sweet Mrs. Byrne!' Mrs. Byrne, it appeared, slept in the room under which this scene occurred; so that whenever Mr. Cooke addressed her he looked down upon the floor, as if more certain of his wishes reaching her, at the same time tapping with his foot.

"'Mistress Byrne, my darling, another jug, *sweet* Mrs. Byrne!' which she answered in tones quite audible through the slightly-built ceiling.

"'Indeed, Mr. Cooke, and I'm gone to bed, sure, and you can't have any more to-night.'

"*Cooke* (breaking the jug over her head).—'Do you hear *that*, Mistress Byrne?'

"*Mrs. B.*—'Indeed and I do, Mr. Cooke, sure enough!'

"*Cooke* (throwing in turns chairs, poker, tongs, and shovel down with a clash).—'Do you hear *that*, Mistress Byrne?'

"*Mrs. B.*—'God knows and I do, Mr. Cooke.'

"Mr. Cooke then began to throw the fragments he had made out of the window. The young man, apprehensive lest he might force him to make his exit after the damaged furniture, made another bold attempt to decamp. 'Stay where you are,' roared the now frenzied Cooke, grasping him violently. 'I will go,' said the now determined youth. 'Will you?' said Cooke. He then dragged his victim to the window, and roared out, 'Watch! Watch!' A watchman, who had been already attracted by the clatter amongst the movables, asked the cause of the disturbance; when, to the horror of his struggling prisoner, Cooke exclaimed, 'I give this man in charge; he has committed a capital offence—he has committed a murder.' 'I!' said his amazed companion. 'Yes,' said Cooke to the watchman, 'to my certain knowledge he has been this night guilty of a cruel, atrocious murder in cold blood. He has most barbarously murdered an inoffensive Jew-gentleman, of the name of *Mordeana*, and I charge him with it in the name of Macklin, author of "Love à la Mode."' At this moment the supposed criminal slipped out of his grasp, and made for the door. Cooke followed him, and taking up the candles ran on the staircase with them, crying out, as he threw

them and the candlesticks after him, 'Well, if you will go, you sha'n't say I sent you to bed without light!' But the young man reached his room, and, securely fastened in, he heard a long colloquy between the watchman and the tragedian, who had some trouble in explaining away the account he had given to him of the *murdered* 'Jew-gentleman.'"

But the story of his wild escapades darkens after his strange elopement to America in 1810, where he crowded into the space of a few weeks more violent eccentricity than he had ever exhibited during many years of his extravagant life. He was at the time engaged at Covent Garden, and the mysterious manner in which he was, as it were, smuggled out of England, with nightly journeyings in post chaises, secret embarkation, &c., was highly melodramatic. The real cause of the mystery was the uncertain humor of this singular being, whose nearest approach to a rational mood was a sort of gloomy torpor in the interval between his debauches. The rude fare and hardships of the voyage had the best effect on his health, and he arrived in the country, which he was destined never to leave, comparatively a new man.

His appearance at New York attracted what was considered the greatest house ever known in America. The effect of his great acting was prodigious. But after a few nights he began to yield to his old habits.

"During the time that had elapsed since his landing, Mr. Cooke had been gradually giving way more and more to his old enemy. His want of self-restraint had rendered it necessary to cease those invitations to dinner-parties which curiosity, and a desire to distinguish his talents, would otherwise have made incessant. But every night after acting was devoted to indulgence, and the consequent deplorable state sometimes extended to depriving him of

voice on the following night of playing; but heretofore he had not exposed himself palpably to the public.

"After playing Sir Giles, he indulged himself as usual, but became unusually offensive in words and manner, as his unhappy madness increased; and at length, at variance with himself and his host, he retired sullenly to his chamber, and, as was frequent with him, sat up all night. In the morning, he went to bed. About noon he arose and leaving an excuse with the servant for not dining at home, went out without having seen any other part of the family.

"He rambled about the suburbs of the city in his solitary manner, for some hours, and then directed his steps to the Tontine Coffee House, the place at which he lodged upon his landing. Here he dined, and repeated his maddening draughts, till late at night, or in the morning, he again sunk to rest; if sinking to partial oblivion, overwhelmed by intemperance, deserves that quiet appellation. . . .

"The 19th December had been appointed for his benefit. 'Cato' was the play. The bills announced the last night of Mr. Cooke's engagement previous to his proceeding to Boston; the tragedy of 'Cato' and the farce of 'Love à la Mode,' for Mr. Cooke's benefit. The rehearsals of 'Cato' had been called, but the tragedy of 'Cato' was rehearsed without the presence of the hero. Cooke looked into the theatre on his way from the Coffee House to the manager's, and asked the prompter if 'all was well.' His appearance indicated too strongly that all was not well with him. He came into the green-room, and hearing the call-boy call, as usual, the performers to come to the stage, by the names of the characters they were to represent—Juba—Syphax—Cato—he beckoned the boy to him.

"'My good lad, don't you know it's a benefit? we'll rehearse the play to-night.' . . .

"He then proceeded with the intent of removing his

trunks to the Coffee House. Fortunately for him, a friend prevented him from carrying this design into execution, and upon being assured that no notice would be taken of his conduct, he gladly relinquished his plan, and dismissed the images of resentful enmity which he had conjured up to stimulate him to the act.

"In the mean time he had never read a line of Cato, and he was now incapable of reading to any purpose. The house filled. An audience so numerous or more genteel, had never graced the walls of the New York theatre. The money received was eighteen hundred and seventy-eight dollars.

"Soon, very soon, it was perceived that the Roman patriot, the godlike Cato, was not to be seen in Mr. Cooke. The mind of the actor was utterly bewildered; he hesitated, repeated substituted speeches from other plays, or endeavored to substitute incoherencies of his own—but his playing extempore was not so amusing as Sir John's—the audience which had assembled to admire, turned away with disgust.

"After the play, I walked into the green-room. He was dressed for Sir Archy M'Sarcasm. As soon as he saw me, he came up to meet me, and exclaimed, 'Ah, it's all over now, we are reconciled—but I was very wild in the play—quite bewildered—do you know that I could not remember one line, after having recited the other—I caught myself once or twice giving Shakespeare for Addison;' and then with his chuckle and his eyes turned away, 'Heaven forgive me!—If you have ever heard anything of me, you must have heard that I always have a frolic on my benefit day. If a man cannot take a liberty with his *friends*, who the devil can he take a liberty with?'

"By the time the curtain drew up for the farce, he was so far recovered, that the words, being perfectly familiar, came trippingly from the tongue, and he being encouraged

by finding himself in possession of his powers again, exerted them to the utmost, and played Sir Archy as well as ever he had done.

"He had played in New York seventeen nights, and the amount of money received by the manager was *twenty-one thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars*. Making an average of $1269\frac{29}{100}$ dollars for each night.

"I had been told frequently of his asserting over the bottle, or under its influence, that he had been in America during our revolutionary contest, naming particularly the regiment he belonged to, speaking of various actions in which he had fought for his royal master, and discomfited and slaughtered the rebels; particularly one day when walking on our beautiful promenade, 'the battery,' and viewing the objects which adorn and surround one of the finest bays in the world, he called Mr. Price's attention to the heights of Brooklyn, and pointing, exclaimed:

"'That's the spot! *we* marched up! the rebels retreated! we charged! they fled! we mounted that hill—I carried the colors of the 5th, my father carried them before me, and my son now carries them—I led—Washington was in the rear of the rebels—I pressed forward—when at this moment, Sir William Howe, now Lord Howe, and the Lord forever d—n him for it, cried halt!—but for that, sir, I should have taken Washington, and there would have been an end to the rebellion!'

"Notwithstanding his frequent recurrence to these rhodomontades, I had never heard him, until the day he embarked for Rhode Island, on his way to Boston, say anything which approached the subject. This morning in Broadway, on his road to the packet, he exclaimed, 'This is Broadway! This is the street through which Sir Henry Clinton used to gallop every day, full tilt! helter skelter! and his aids after him, as if the cry was, the devil take the hindmost!'

"I could not but be struck by this description of what I had so often seen when a boy; and though Mr. Cooke might have had this circumstance from various sources, he spoke so much like one describing what he had seen, that an impression was made upon my mind which the twenty months' hiatus in his chronicle revived in a very forcible manner.

"On the 6th he played Pierre to 368 dollars. This was a falling off indeed. He was next advertised for the favorite Sir Pertinax, but in vain; the amount was only 457 dollars on the 8th.

"That this failure of attraction sank deep into his wounded spirit, I had an opportunity afterwards of knowing. Of fortitude he had none: he sought oblivion in madness. . . .

"About ten o'clock in the morning of the 19th of February, 1811, after one of the most inclement nights of one of the coldest of our winters, when our streets were choked with ice and snow, a little girl came to the manager's office at the theatre with a note scarcely legible, running thus:

"'Dear Dunlap, send me one hundred dollars. G. F. Cooke.'

"I asked the child of whom she got the paper she had given me.

"'Of the gentleman, sir.'

"'Where is he?'

"'At our house.'

"'Where is that?'

"'In Reed Street, behind the Hospital.'

"'When did this gentleman come to your house?'

"'Last night, sir, almost morning—mother is sick, sir, and I was sitting up with her, and a negro and a watchman brought the gentleman to our house and knocked, and we knew the watchman; and so mother let the gentleman

come in and sit by the fire. He didn't want to come in at first, but said when he was at the door, "Let me lay down here and die." '

"Mr. Price came to the theatre, and I learned from him that Cooke having sat up late and become turbulent, to the annoyance of the family, he had insisted upon his going to bed, and he had apparently complied; but that when the household were all at rest, he had come down from his chamber, unlocked the street-door, and sallied out in the face of a west wind of more than Russian coldness. After consulting with Mr. Price, and showing the paper brought by the girl, I put one hundred dollars in small bank-notes in my pocket, and taking the messenger as my pilot, went in quest of George Frederick.

"As we walked, I asked my conductress what the gentleman had been doing since he came to her mother's house.

"'Sitting by the fire, sir, and talking.'

"'Has he had anything to drink?'

"'Yes, sir; he sent the negro man out for brandy, and he brought two quarts.—Poor old gentleman,' she continued, 'the people at the house where he lived must have used him very ill, and it was very cruel to turn him out o' doors *such a night.*'

"'Does he say he was turned out o' doors?'

"'Yes, sir,—he talks a great deal—to be sure I believe he is crazy.'

"We entered a small wooden building in Reed Street. The room was dark, and appeared the more so, owing to the transition from the glare of snow in the street. I saw nothing distinctly for the first moment, and only perceived that the place was full of people. I soon found that they were the neighbors, brought in to gaze at the strange, crazy gentleman: and the sheriff's officers distraining for the

rent on the furniture of the sick widow who occupied the house.

"The bed of the sick woman filled one corner of the room, surrounded by curtains—sheriff's officers, a table, with pen, ink, and inventory, occupied another portion—a motley group, of whom Cooke was one, hid the fire-place from view, and the remainder of the apartment was filled by cartmen, watchmen, women, and children.

"When I recognized Cooke, he had turned from the fire, and his eye was on me with an expression of shame and chagrin at being found in such a situation. His skin and eyes were red, his linen dirty, his hair wildly pointing in every direction from his 'distracted globe,' and over his knee was spread an infant's bib, or something else, with which, having lost his pocket handkerchief, he wiped his incessantly moistened visage. After a wild stare at me, he changed from the first expression of his countenance, and welcomed me. He asked me why I had come. I replied, that I had received his note, and brought him the money he had required. I sat down by him, and after a few incoherent sentences of complaint, and entreaty that I would not leave him, he burst into tears. I soothed him and replied to his repeated entreaties of 'don't leave me,' by promises of remaining with him, but told him we must leave that place. He agreed, but added, with vehemence, 'Not back to his house! No, never! never!!'—Which apparent resolution he confirmed with vehement and reiterated oaths. The officer let me know that the gentleman had stopped the levying on the goods, and agreed to pay the quarter's rent. I was proceeding to make some inquiries, but Cooke, in the most peremptory tone, required that the money should be paid; as if fearing that his ability to fulfill his promise should be doubted by the bystanders. I paid the money and demanded a receipt. The

officer, who was nearly drunk, asked for the gentleman's Christian name; when with all the dignity of the buskin the drooping hero raised his head, and roared out most discordantly, 'George Frederick! George Frederick Cooke!' The peculiar sharpness of the higher tones of his voice, joined to the unmelodious and croaking notes of debauchery, with his assumed dignity and squalid appearance, were truly comic though pitiable. . . .

"The next day after our arrival at Philadelphia, Mr. Cooke rehearsed Richard.

"After the rehearsal, he went to walk with the managers and see the city, while I attended to other engagements, having promised to meet him at Mr. Wood's, where we were to dine by invitation.

"We accordingly met and dined at Mr. Wood's, and I saw realized all that insanity of conduct, and licentiousness of speech, of which I had before heard much, but had never yet seen an exhibition.

"The party was principally theatrical, and after dinner, unfortunately the wine circulated more freely than the wit. My hero, who had protested in the morning that he would take care of himself, and only drink wine and water, was supplied by the politeness of his host with some good old port, which he threw down without remorse; but I cannot say without shame, for his eye most assiduously avoided mine, which probably he perceived had an expression of anxious watchfulness in it. The afternoon was oppressively warm, and seeing that Cooke's fate for the day was fixed, I retired to the house of a friend and took tea.

"Between eight and nine o'clock I returned to Mr. Wood's, and before I entered the door heard the high and discordant notes of George Frederick's voice. I found the party increased by the addition of some New York and Philadelphia gentlemen, who had been dining together

elsewhere, and knowing that the veteran bacchanalian was here, called in to see him. And they saw an exhibition of him, in all the eccentricity of madness. Mr. Wood, whose habits were those of temperance, and whose health was delicate, had, according to a custom 'more honored in the breach than the observance,' pushed about the bottle, and tasted to prove that it was good; and was now primed with mirth, and so charged with words, that they flowed, or rather were thrown out, high, noisy, and foaming like the incessant stream of a *jet d'eau*. Cooke, infinitely annoyed at this never-ceasing eloquence from a Yankee manager, at a time too when he felt that all should attend to him, would interrupt his host by striking his fist on the table, and crying out with a tremendous shout, 'Hear me, sir!'

"When I came in he immediately made way for me near him, exclaiming, 'Ah! I see I was mistaken. I have been telling them that you were in bed by this time; but I see how it is, you have been taking your tea. He owns himself to be a tea-sot. He is the only man that shall command George Frederick Cooke, and I put myself under his orders.'

"W——, one of the newcomers, who was mischievously filling up bumpers for Cooke, and persuading him, the moment after drinking that he neglected to drink, whispered me, 'I suppose then your orders will be sailing orders.' I begged him to desist from his sport, and he and his companions went off professing that they were going to prepare for a ball.

"'A ball!' exclaimed Cooke, as they bade him good-night, and went off, 'they reel from the bottle to the ball! If ever I have an opportunity of quizzing these Yankees, I'll remember this. "I'll not forget the drunken gentlemen in their dirty boots going to a ball! But it's just like everything else in the d—d country.'

"Mr. Wood, who was sufficiently under the influence of his own good wine not to see the uselessness of opposing Cooke, instead of laughing, began seriously to explain:

"'But, my dear sir, they are only going to change their dress before going to a ball.'

"'Don't talk to *me*, sir! Pretty fellows for the company of ladies, just from the tavern, the cigar, and the bottle!'

"'But, my dear sir——'

"Then Cooke would dash his fist on the table, with the tremendous 'Hear me, sir!' which always produced silence after a laugh at the ludicrous impropriety of his peremptory tone and manner.

"'They don't know what belongs to gentlemen, and have no idea of the decency and suavity of politeness.—My dear D—, sit down by me—don't leave me again. Didn't I throw out my voice this morning! Ah, ha!—haw! Ah, ha!—I astonished the Yankee actors!—I gave it them—I'll show these fellows what acting is!'

"*Wood.* 'You frightened some of our young men, sir; but they are clever lads, I'll assure you.'

"*C*——. "Clever are they? I wonder how you are to find it out. But you're all alike!'

"*W*——. 'My dear sir, I have seen you act when you were surrounded by dire dogs.'

"*C*——. 'The worst of them, better than the best of you.'

"*W*——. 'Jack B——, now, he's a clever lad, but you won't say he's an actor. I love Jack, he's my friend, but he's a dire dog of an actor.'

"*C*——. 'He's your friend, is he? you take an odd way of showing your friendship. I feel inclined to be severe.' Turning to one near him: 'I'll cut up these Yankee actors, and their wooden god—don't leave me.

O, the night I slept at Amboy—I never slept in my life before—poor Billy Lewis is dead—sixty-five—I thought I should have seen him again.'

"*W*——. 'Ah, sir, he was an actor!'

"*C*——. 'How do you know, sir?'

"*W*——. 'Why, my dear sir, I have seen him many a time.'

"*C*——. 'You see him! where should you see him?'

"*W*——. 'In England, sir—in London.'

"*C*——. 'And what then? What the more would *you* know from having seen him?' And then to another person, and in another tone, 'Didn't I throw out my voice this morning! I'll show them what acting is. They talk of their Cooper,' raising his voice furiously, 'their idol! their wooden god! Compare *me* to Cooper! Have not I stood the trial with John? What is your Cooper compared to Kemble!'

"*W*——. 'But, Mr. Cooke, you are supposing a comparison that no one has made—Mr. Cooper is a gentleman and a scholar——'

"*C*——. 'A scholar? How do you find that out? His scholarship is deep, it never appears.'

"*W*——. 'But as to comparison with you, no one thinks of making any——'

"*C*——. 'Sir, I have heard it. An actor!—he's no actor—a ranting mouther, that can't read a line! I appeal to you——'

"'Sir, Mr. Cooper is *my* friend——'

"He appeared to pay no attention to the reply, but ceased speaking of Cooper, and turned his abuse more particularly against Mr. Wood's acting, of which he knew nothing, as he had never seen him play, nor heard him recite a speech.

"While a servant by his desire went for a carriage, he

continued this strain of abuse on any person whose image was presented to his mind, and particularly upon Americans, and their country, at the same time drinking what was officiously poured out for him, in that hurried and forced manner with which we have seen a nauseous drug thrown down the throat; when suddenly he looked at Mr. Wood, who sat opposite to him, and exclaimed:

"'Why don't you drink, sir? You don't drink.'

"'I am waiting,' pointing to a bottle of wine in a cooler, 'till *this* wine cools, sir.'

"'So—and give me the warm—d——d polite! but you are all alike—Cooper and Price and you are——'

"'Sir, I never allow a man, whatever his situation may be, to make use of such an appellation to me.'

"Cooke had made use of an expression which conveyed an idea of unfair dealing in respect to his engagement, and a term of vulgar insult; and now seeing a serious effect produced, immediately appeared to collect himself for a retreat. Mr. Wood proceeded:

"'If you think there is anything unfair on our part, in your Philadelphia engagement, Mr. Warren and myself will instantly annul it. Sir, you have made use of an appellation which I will not suffer any man to make use of to me.'

"Cooke disavowed all intention of disrespect, and backed out most manfully, until a perfect reconciliation took place. . . .

"During this visit to New York, Mr. Cooke exhibited himself at a tea-party. A number of ladies and gentlemen met, all anxious to see this extraordinary creature, and anticipating the pleasure to be derived, as they supposed, from his conversation, his humor, and his wit. Cooke, charged much higher with wine than with wit, and with that stiffness produced by the endeavor to counteract involuntary motion, was introduced into a large circle of

gentlemen, distinguished for learning, or wit, or taste; and ladies, equally distinguished for those acquirements and endowments most valued in their sex.

"A part of the property of the tragedian which had been seized by the custom-house officers, under the non-importation law, had not been yet released, owing to some delay from necessary form, and this was a constant subject of irritation to him, particularly that they should withhold from him the celebrated cups presented to him by the Liverpool managers; and now his introductory speech among his expectant circle was addressed to one of the gentlemen, with whom he was acquainted, and was an exclamation without any prefatory matter, of 'They have stolen my cups!'

"The astonishment of such an assembly may be imagined. After making his bows with much circumspection, he seated himself and very wisely stuck to his chair for the remainder of the evening; and he likewise stuck to his text, and his cups triumphed over every image that could be presented to his imagination.

"'Madam, they have stopped my cups. Why did they not stop my swords? No, they let my *swords* pass. But my cups will melt, and they have a greater love for silver than for steel. My swords would be useless with them; but they can melt my cups and turn them to dollars! And my Shakespeare—they had better keep that: they need his instruction, and may improve by him—if they know how to read him.'

"Seeing a print of Kemble in Rolla, he addressed it: 'Ah, John, are you there!' then turning to Master Payne, he, in his half-whispering manner, added, 'I don't want to die in this country—John Kemble will laugh.'

"Among the company was an old and tried revolutionary officer—a true patriot of '76.

"Hearing Cooke rail against the country and the government, he at first began to explain, and then to defend; but soon finding what his antagonist's situation was, he ceased opposition. Cooke continued his insolence, and finding that he was unnoticed, and even what he said in the shape of query unattended to, he went on:

"'That's right; you are prudent—the government may hear of it—walls have ears!'

"Tea was repeatedly presented to him, which he refused. The little black girl with her *server* next offered him cake—this he rejected with some asperity. Fruit was offered to him, and he told the girl he was 'sick of seeing her face.' Soon after, she brought him wine. 'Why, you little black angel,' says Cooke, taking the wine, 'you look like the devil, but you bear a passport that would carry you unquestioned into Paradise.'

"The company separated early, and Master Payne happily resigned his visitor to the safe keeping of the waiters of the Tontine Coffee House.

"At Baltimore, as in every other city on the continent, the greatest admiration was shown of Mr. Cooke's talents as an actor, and the strongest desire to pay him every respect as a gentleman. But the same obstacles arose to the fulfillment of this wish as at every other place he had visited.

"In one instance, when a gentleman happened to mention that his family were among the first settlers of Maryland, he asked him if he had carefully preserved the family jewels. And on being questioned as to his meaning, replied, 'the chains and handcuffs.'

"The notoriety of his character preserved him from such returns as such language would have met if coming from other men; and this, perhaps, encouraged him to indulge what he called his propensity to sarcasm.

"At a dinner-party given in honor of him by Mr. ——, he was led, still continuing his libations, to descant on Shakespeare, and the mode of representing his great characters; which he did eloquently, and to the delight of a large company. Suddenly, to the astonishment of them all, he jumped up, and exclaimed:

"'Who among you sent me that d——d anonymous letter?'

"'What do you mean, Mr. Cooke?'

"'You know what I mean. What have I done to offend you? Have I not treated ye all with more respect than ye deserved? And now to have a charge of so base a nature made against me!'

"'What do you complain of, Mr. Cooke?'

"'Sir, I am accused of falsehood. I am accused of making false assertions. I have received an anonymous letter containing this line alone, "Justify your words." Sir, my words are truth. What have I said that I cannot justify? I have perhaps been too keen upon the character of your country, but truth is the severest satire upon it. I am ready to justify what I have said!'

"Mr. ——, seeing his company thrown into confusion, and all harmony broken up, arose and expostulated with his guest, and finally hinted that the anonymous letter was a creation of his heated imagination. Cooke then resumed his seat, and fixing his eye on his host for some time, exclaimed, 'I have marked you, sir! I have had my eye upon you; it is time that your impertinence should be curbed!'

"This excessive licentiousness of speech, with the peculiar manner of the speaker, appeared so ludicrous, that the company burst into loud laughter, and Cooke, changing his manner, joined heartily with them, and again resumed his glass.

"Some time after, a gentleman told him that it was reported that Mr. Madison, the President of the United States, purposed to come from Washington to Baltimore, to see him act.

"'If he does, I'll be d—d if I play before him. What! I! George Frederick Cooke! who have acted before the majesty of Britain, play before your Yankee president! No!—I'll go forward to the audience, and I'll say, Ladies and gentlemen——'

"Here he was interrupted playfully by Mr. W——, who happened to be dressed in black.

"'Oh, no, Mr. Cooke, that would not be right in this country; you should say, Friends and fellow-citizens.'

"Cooke, surveying him contemptuously, cried, 'Hold your tongue, you d—d methodist preacher;' and then proceeded—'Ladies and gentlemen, the king of the Yankee-doodles has come to see me act; me, *me*, George Frederick Cooke! who have stood before my royal master George the Third, and received his imperial approbation! And shall I exert myself to play before one of his rebellious subjects, who arrogates kingly state in defiance of his master? No, it is degradation enough to play before rebels; but I'll not go on for the amusement of a king of rebels, the contemptible king of the Yankee-doodles!'

"This effusion only excited laughter, and he went on to expatiate on his deeds of arms in the war against the rebels; and every place in the neighborhood where an action had been fought was the scene of his military achievements.

"His garrulity led him to talk of his domestic affairs, and to lament that he had no children; but shortly after, filling a bumper, he proposed the health of his eldest son, a captain in the 5th.

"'What is his name, Mr. Cooke?'

"'What is my name, sir? George Frederick Cooke.'

"A short time after, his second son was proposed with a bumper.

"'What is his name, Mr. Cooke?'

"What should it be, sir, but George Frederick Cooke?'

"With difficulty he was prevailed upon to get into a coach to return home to Baltimore. Still it was necessary that some one should attend him, and late at night his host performed that kind office. This offended Cooke, and he began to abuse him, and everything belonging to the country. This gentleman observing the stump of a tree near the wheel-track, as they passed through a grove, cautioned the coachman. 'What, sir, do you pretend to direct my servant?' cried Cooke. His companion humored him by apologizing; but seeing the coachman driving too near the edge of a bridge, he again spoke to him.

"'This is too much,' cried Cooke; 'get out of my coach, sir!—out—stop, coachman!'

"'Drive on!'

"'Get out! Do you order my coachman? Get out, or this fist shall——'

"Mr. ——, who had been told Cooke's character, interrupted him by exclaiming:

"'Sit still, sir, or I'll blow your brains out this instant.'

"Cooke was petrified, and sat like a statue—but soon began with 'Has George Frederick Cooke come to this d——d country to be treated thus? Shall it be told in England!—Well, sir, if you will not get out, I will,' and he opened the door. Mr. —— was obliged to stop the coach, for fear of injury to Cooke, who tumbled himself out, and surlily sat down under a tree. With great difficulty his opposition was overcome, and Mr. ——, near daylight, got rid of his troublesome and turbulent guest by depositing him at his lodgings.

"Thus in every city the disposition to honor his talents

was opposed by his unhappy habits, and it was found that, whatever he once might have been, he was no longer an agreeable associate for gentlemen, unless the bottle was kept out of sight."

But there was soon to be an end to this round of drunkenness, and mad fury, and grotesqueness. So wild and disorderly a life was not destined to endure long, and this American outburst hurried the whole to a conclusion. It would be impossible to give an idea of the extravagant alternations that marked his short stay in the country. No wonder that Byron should write of the strange record of his adventures, that "nothing like it has drenched the press. All green-room and tap-room. Drams and the drama—brandy, whisky punch, and latterly toddy, overflow every page."

After a series of attacks and recoveries that almost invariably followed when he returned to a sober course of life, he found it impossible to resist the seduction of fresh debauches, and at last, in September, 1812, he expired at the age of fifty-seven, quite worn out.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### ELLISTON.*

THE looking at portraits of famous comedians seems to be entertainment almost second to that of seeing them on the stage. No such intellectual pleasure is of course to be gathered from photographs,—which bear both portrait and spectator downwards, and show how far below the high

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* Born 1774, died 1831.

standard we had dreamed of must be the originals. This disagreeable effect is owing to the suppression of all that is intelligent, and to the development of what is earthly and material—owing to the enforced attitude and impassive mood required by the process. To those who so often repeat that a photograph must be the best kind of likeness, it can therefore be said that the mere outline of face and figure is but an element of resemblance; and that expression under the most favorable emotion—as when the orator is kindling with his subject, or when the most agreeable faculties are awakened—is a far more essential point. Hence it is that between photography and art there is a sort of sunken fence which by no ingenuity or amount of improvement can ever be crossed.

Among theatrical portraits, on the contrary, are found the most favorable specimens of the painter's craft. There is a vivacity, a life, a variety not found in other likenesses. There has been a regular line of actors' portrait painters—Hogarth, Zoffany, Harlow, and De Wilde, perhaps the most versatile and practiced of all. It is impossible to give an idea of the range of expression, the infinite intelligence of the faces thus happily preserved. The full-length of Edwin as the "Marquis" in "A Midnight Hour," at South Kensington, is a happy example, and exhibits an airy ease, an aristocratic refinement, as well as a hint of that slight exaggeration of bearing which Lamb insisted was necessary to true comedy, as opposed to the more exact imitation or "realism" which is the highest aim of our day. In presence of such pictures we enjoy comedy at second hand, and indeed have a glimpse of comedy itself.

These reflections are more particularly suggested by the portrait of an admirable comedian, Robert Elliston, which hangs upon the walls of the Garrick Club, and which, like so many of its fellows, is delightful to look on—being the

complement, as it were, of his life, which has a dash of one of Congreve's gay heroes. To such a career it would be unadvisable to apply the rule and square of order or morality; that can be done by the proper appraisers—the students and regulators of Society, to whom such are sadly amenable. But there is a comedy side to life for which a later generation makes an audience, and which is to be treated as Elia so indulgently justified the loose but sparkling pieces of Congreve and Wycherley, as belonging to an artificial realm of their own, where no moral law obtained. Something of the same immunity is enjoyed by these *viveurs* in the flesh, whose derelictions are carried off pleasantly, and scarcely felt as wrongs by even the victim. Nowadays this species of airy comedy has passed away from the stage, because it has passed away from real life. Society has grown strict, and insists that all should be subject to the same discipline and rules. No agreeable Sheridan puts off the creditor with a good story, or tricks him after a fashion the creditor himself must smile at.

Elliston was one of the comedians of real as well as of stage life; he was always playing "Mirabel," or "Archer," in the street or the house; and it would be hard to say whether he brought these manners with him from the drawing-room to the stage, or from the stage to the drawing-room. These two categories were indeed not separated by any hard line, but were blended. His handsome figure, brightly intelligent face, in which lurked a roguish insinuation, or tone of voice conveyed a sort of second intention, as it were, that sort of legitimate *double entendre* which in its true sense makes half the charm of comedy. He was always gay and gallant, making comedy speeches off the stage, and dealing out magnified flourishes to all the world. Drunken habits, and other indecencies, to say nothing of vanity and the pride of managerial prerogative, turned

what was merely histrionic exaggeration into positive eccentricity, and towards the end of his life the confusion between the two states of being was complete.

Such a hero, when an insinuating youth, of course ran away from home to go on the stage. Though his father was a watchmaker, his other connections were respectable, and his uncle a dignitary of one of the Oxford Colleges. His graceful figure, manners, and intellgent style soon advanced him in the profession, or rather in *both* professions, for society was henceforth found to be as profitable and agreeable a one as his official calling. His marriage had a sort of comedy flavor; a rather *passée* dancing mistress at Bath, Miss Fleming, having fallen in love with him. It was her assistant, however, that was the object of his attentions, whom he eventually married. His wife proved an excellent, amiable woman, almost too tolerant of the levities and failings of the gay husband, who indulged in the fashionable excesses of high play, deep drinking, and gallantry. The average course of his domestic life, or the sober records of his professional engagements, would have little interest for the reader, and belong to the regular annals of the stage. It is a study of *character*, eccentric, buoyant, and exceptional, that is presented here. After his reputation was made he began to attract attention by a sort of extravagance, and to court the attention and sympathy of the public by devices outside the line of his profession. This was owing to his vanity, which had become egregious, and which led him into the delusion that he was of such importance that his proceedings off the stage were equally interesting with his legitimate performances on the boards. The agreeable comedian was unhappily gifted with a turn for speech-making, which led him, like so many of his brethren, to turn the stage into a rostrum, or tribune, from which he could communicate his grievances and

opinions to the audience. The latter, from curiosity and the desire of novelty, is naturally ready to encourage such exhibitions, which have often a dramatic character of their own, though a character not in harmony with the place.

In July, 1805, a piece by Andrew Cherry—a facetious actor who once ended his letter "You cannot make two bites of A CHERRY"—was brought out at the Haymarket, and was a complete failure. Elliston, however, who had taken a perverse interest in it, determined that it should have a second trial on the following night, when it met with even a more hostile reception. During its progress, when loud disapprobation was being expressed, it was noticed that the excited patron of the piece had singled out a gentleman in the boxes, who was conspicuous in expressing his opinion, and half unsheathing his stage sword, hurled defiance at him. At the close of the performance, when the curtain had fallen in a storm of disapproval, a long delay succeeded, which was followed by the abrupt appearance of Mr. Elliston, who was much excited, and appeared to arrive fresh from some scene of scuffle or confusion. He thus addressed the audience:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

"I am at present considerably agitated, not so much by what has occurred before the curtain, as by a circumstance which has just taken place behind it. [Here there was *universal consternation and anxiety.*]

"I have, ever since I had the honor of appearing before the public, enjoyed such a share of its favor and patronage, that no consideration whatever shall deter me from speaking the truth. The number of those who supported the present piece last night induced me to give it out for a second representation, although, I *solemnly declare* (*pressing his hand on his heart*), contrary to my own opinion (*mix-*

*ture of plaudits and disapprobation*). It *must now clearly appear to every unprejudiced person* that the sense of the house is decidedly against it (*bursts of applause and some faint hisses*). I therefore, with your permission, beg to substitute 'The Dramatist' for it to-morrow night" (*very loud plaudits, with some few hisses*).

The passage "it must now clearly appear to every *unprejudiced* person, that the sense of the house," &c., is deliciously Ellistonian, and touches the true "note" of his character.

Much speculation was excited by the exordium: and it was soon known that something extraordinary had taken place behind the scenes. Elliston, it seems, had attacked the performers, and, in "a scolding and denouncing manner," had attributed the failure to their bad acting. This intemperateness was naturally resented; and Mathews angrily replied that every one "had played as well as Elliston, if not better." The latter promptly gave his brother the lie, and, according to the report, was instantly knocked down: as he rose and tried to retaliate, he received a second blow, which again prostrated him. This unseemly contest might have gone on for some time, had not some peacemaker reminded the combatants that the audience were waiting. Threatening all round him with vengeance, the excited Elliston, wearing all the marks of the fray on his person, then rushed before the audience and made his enigmatical statement.

The matter could not, of course, be allowed to rest there, and on the following day, the assaulted actor, as eager to present himself before readers as he was before hearers, wrote a letter to the papers. The underlined passages are pleasantly significant of the "euphuistic" side of his character, and the notion that "those who knew him best must be sensible that he was *not likely to be seen in any such state*

*of degradation*," i.e., prostrated by a knock-down blow, would have delighted Lamb himself.

"SIR,

"Some extraordinary misrepresentation having appeared with respect to an occurrence at this theatre last night, in which I happened to be a party, I owe it in justice to myself to require that the facts may be correctly stated.

"It is true that a momentary altercation did arise between Mr. Mathews and myself immediately after the dropping of the curtain last night, which was attended by some warmth on both sides; but it is not true, as has been asserted, that I was 'knocked down twice,' nor indeed that I was 'knocked down' at all. *Nor is it true that I was placed in any situation humiliating to my feelings as a man, nor in the slightest degree derogatory to my character as a gentleman. Without using any idle professions as to my own means of self-defence, I may be pardoned when I say that those who know me best must be sensible that I am not likely to be seen in any such state of degradation.*

"Neither is it true that this disagreement grew out of any assertion made by me, that Mr. Mathews, or that any gentleman of this theatre, had done less than his duty in supporting the piece which had not met with the public approbation. What the circumstances were it would be useless and perhaps impertinent in me to obtrude on the public attention. It is enough to say that Mr. Mathews and myself have every likelihood of being good friends, and that, were we not so, it would be difficult to find any man more ready than myself to subscribe to the professional excellence of Mr. Mathews, and to acknowledge the fidelity and zeal with which he at all times exerts his talents for the benefit of the theatre, and for the amusement of the public." . . .

He added a sort of testimonial to this letter, signed by

the two Palmers and some other "bystanders during the accidental difference," as they styled themselves, which was to the effect that it was "totally void of foundation" that Mr. Elliston had been knocked down, and concluding with a sort of Pickwickian declaration that "no circumstance took place which was in any respect dishonorable to that gentleman or indeed to either party." Mathews, to Elliston's infinite annoyance, took the more dignified course of remaining silent, declining either to accept or contradict Elliston's version of the matter. The rather fine distinction was probably made that Mr. Elliston had indeed come to the ground, though not from a blow of Mathews. The matter could hardly remain there, and a Mr. Philips waited on Mathews's "friend," Sir John Carr, to demand an apology for the assault. This was refused, on the ground that the blow had been returned; and, as both parties were firm, the only solution of the difficulty seemed to be the one then fashionable among gentlemen. Suddenly, to the amazement of those who were looking on, a highly irrelevant issue was tendered and accepted, and Mr. Mathews was asked to declare in writing that "he had never endeavored to injure Mr. Elliston in the opinion of the managers of the Haymarket Theatre or *any one of them*," or that he had "never countenanced any party in hostility to Mr. Elliston's interests." In return for which declaration, in whose legal particularity Elliston seemed to look for the satisfaction he could not otherwise obtain, the latter on the same day declared that he had been mistaken "in *the suspicions he had formed* as to any injurious conduct," on the part of Mr. Mathews, and regretted he should have so far wronged Mr. Mathews as to have entertained any of the kind. There is nothing more amusing in the whole annals of gentlemen's difficulties; though the "Pickwickian sense" of originally

hostile declarations has become almost a proverb, it has never taken so entertaining a shape. The two actors, who had been schoolfellows, were reconciled, and when they appeared on the stage in some piece where they had to shake hands, the late unseemly quarrel was recognized by the audience, and a hearty burst of applause greeted this symbolical token of friendship. Thus the affair ended.

A sort of omnivorous passion for directing theatres had taken possession of this singular being, and he had soon collected into his single hands the reins of management of nearly half a dozen different houses. Indeed so overpowering was this fancy, that any sort of showman's exhibition that came into the market became, as it were, fish for his net, and he could not refrain from offering for dwarfs, circuses, monsters, &c. This curious taste could be accounted for, as these various offices of command presented so many opportunities of exercising the show of authority, speeches, and circumlocutions in which he delighted. He thus secured theatres at Liverpool, Birmingham—the "Royal Circus," which he converted into the more imposing Surrey Theatre, the Olympic, and later the great house of Drury Lane itself. Here, as may be imagined, he reveled in dignity, and speeched to his heart's content.

It was not, indeed, in his orthodox relations to the drama, but in his dealings with his audience, that his quaint gifts were exhibited. The presence of the crowd, the lights, the glitter, above all some commotion or excitement, seemed to call forth those curious arts which the rudely organized might class as "humbug," but which were in truth specimens of a high kind of art.—That they were removed from the disagreeable category just named, is proved by the success which almost invariably attended their exertion. We can hear him for instance in an

emergency when a popular actor, set down for a particular part, had not appeared on the stage. This truant player's name was Carles,—it is Mrs. Mathews who tells the story:—

"The audience began to show its disapprobation in a noisy way; and 'Carles! Carles!' was the popular demand —a demand which Mr. Elliston was not backward to answer in his own way, and coming promptly forward with his most profound bow, respectfully, though haughtily, inquired of the '*Ladies* and Gentlemen' what was 'their *pleasure*.'

"Several voices vociferated, '*Carles!*' Elliston knitted his brows with excessive earnestness, affecting to be confounded by the noise, and, with increasing gravity, again desired to be acquainted with the occasion of the extraordinary tumult, adding, with something like command in his tone, '*One at a time*, if you please.' Again the popular cry was audible to those who 'had ears to hear.' One malcontent, raising his voice, however, louder than the rest, enforced Mr. Elliston's attention, and, fixing his eyes suddenly upon the man, the manager then turned his face from him for a moment, and haughtily *begging pardon of the rest of the pit*, added, 'Let me hear what *this gentleman* has to say;' and pointing to the turbulent individual in question observed sternly, '*Now*, sir, I'll attend to *you —first*, if the rest of the *gentlemen* will allow me;'" and here he made a stiff bow to the *gentleman* in question. All now became suddenly silent, and the selected person sat down, looking rather sheepish at the distinction shown him above his fellows, and Mr. Elliston, stooping over the orchestra, and fixing his eyes, like a browbeating barrister, on his victim, thus emphatically addressed his chosen man:

"'*Now*, sir, be so good as to inform me *what* it is *you require?*'

"The man, still abashed at being thus singled out for

particular notice, in rather a subdued tone, but affecting his former valor, answered—'Carles! Carles!'

"'Oh! *Carles!!!*' exclaimed Elliston, in a tone of surprise, as if only at that moment aware of the cause of dissatisfaction. 'Oh! ah! you want *Mr. Carles?* Is *that* what you say, sir?'

"'*Yes,*' responded the Pit-ite, with renewed confidence; 'his name's in the bill!'

"'Very *good*, sir!' said the manager, who throughout carried himself with the air of one who felt himself the injured party, 'I understand you now. You are right, so far, sir,—Mr. Carles's name is in the bill.'

"Here Mr. Elliston was interrupted by others who repeated—

"'Yes! yes!—his name's in the bill!—his name's in the bill!'

"'*Gentlemen!* with *your* leave, I will say a few words.' (All was again silent, and the manager's earnestness and dignity increased as he proceeded.) 'I admit that Mr. Carles's name *is* in the bill—I don't wish to deny it, but' (and here he assumed a solemnity of face and voice, and with his deepest tragedy-manner impressively observed)—'*But*, are you to be reminded of the many accidents that may intervene between the morning's issuing of *that bill*, and the evening's fulfillment of its promise? Is it requisite to remind the enlightened and thinking portion of the public here assembled (and he took a sweeping glance round the house), that the chances and changes of human life are dependent on *circumstances* and not upon *ourselves?*'

"Here the 'enlightened' exclaimed, 'Ay, ay! bravo!' and Mr. Elliston, gaining courage from this slight manifestation of sympathy, turned himself once more to his man with renewed *hauteur*, crying sharply, 'And *you*, sir, you who are so *loud* in your demand for Mr. Carles, cannot *you*

also imagine that his absence may be occasioned by some dire distress, some occurrence not within human foresight to anticipate or divert? Can you not picture to yourself the possibility of Mr. Carles at this moment lying upon a sick—nay, perhaps a *dying* bed—surrounded by his weeping children and his agonized wife!' (Mr. Carles was a bachelor)—'whose very bread depends upon the existence of an affectionate, devoted husband and father—and who *may* be deprived of his exertions and support forever? Is it so *very* difficult to imagine a scene like this taking place at the very moment you are calling for him so imperiously to appear before you—selfishly desirous of your present amusement, and unmindful of his probable danger!' (great and general applause.) 'And *you*, sir, will perhaps *repeat* your demand to have Mr. Carles brought before you! Are you a husband? are you a father?'

"'Shame! shame!' resounded now from every part of the pit.

"'You are *right*, sir,' resumed the manager; 'you are *quite* right. It *is* a shame; I blush at such inhumanity!'

"'Turn him out! turn him out!' was now generally vociferated, even by those who had originally joined in the objectionable demand; and Elliston, choosing to receive this suggestion as a *question* addressed to himself, promptly replied with the most dignified assent—

"'*If* you *please!*'

"In the next moment the offending individual was lifted above the heads of his brother malcontents, and, in spite of his vehement remonstrances and struggles, hoisted across the pit, actually ejected, and the door closed upon him by his removers. Mr. Elliston, who had waited the result with great composure, now bowed *very low*, while he received the general applause of the house and retired in grave triumph."

More characteristic still is his device on his benefit night

at Worcester. For this solemnity he had issued a stupendous programme, announcing as the chief feature a magnificent display of fireworks *on the stage!* This novelty caused great excitement and much ingenious anticipation, owing to the conceived impossibility of introducing pyrotechnical effects—at least of such pretension as he had advertised—within the walls of a theatre. The airy comedian, however, gave the matter no thought until a day or two before the event—when all tickets had been taken. He then artfully began to hint to the landlord of the property—a worthy man, much respected in the place—some grave forebodings as to the dangers of such an exhibition, and so skillfully that the owner became alarmed and positively forbade the presentation of a performance so perilous to his interests. Elliston protested, and with much vehement indignation spoke of "his being committed to the public," of his honor engaged and the like. The landlord was inflexible, and could only be prevailed on to keep the matter secret until the night. A crowded house assembled when the evening came round—drawn a good deal by the actor's own popularity, but more excited by the promise of the unusual entertainment held out. In a conspicuous box was seen the worthy landlord of the theatre, naturally a shy and retiring man, induced to attend by the beneficiaire's persuasions. The performance began and proceeded. Elliston exerted all his abilities, and the programme was being gradually got through, when the audience began to grow impatient for the promised entertainment. Cries of "The Fireworks! The Fireworks!" were raised, of which no notice was at first taken—as though it was some vulgar interruption from overcrowding, or other cause. The cries, however, growing more persistent, and finally swelling into an uproar, could not be further ignored. Then Elliston, putting on his great manner,

came forward. Then came the usual pantomime—surprise, admirably depicted, lifting the eyebrows—a wish to hear every one. The fireworks?—He at last apprehended the cause of this discontent, and proceeded to his explanation. He had made the most elaborate arrangements for a magnificent pyrotechnic display—had left nothing undone: but at the last moment came the reflection—what of the *danger!* The number of young, tender girls—of respectable matrons—all collected to do *him* honor—what if the theatre should take fire and be burnt to the ground—the property too of one of the best and worthiest of men, whom they *all* knew—and whom he knew. Here he pointed out the landlord, who was overwhelmed with confusion. He then publicly appealed to him, to say if he had not interposed for the protection of his property; and having thus artfully diverted attention from himself, proceeded to launch out into an eloquent panegyric on his merits. The audience were gradually soothed into good-humor—the ladies—being convinced that they had escaped a great danger—taking his side. "But," he said in conclusion, "But—ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to say I have made arrangements that will in some way make up for this disappointment—Band!" looking down into the orchestra, where three wretched fiddlers furnished the whole strength of the music—"Band! Play up 'God Save the King' directly!" Under the spell of this curious fascination—that genuine belief in himself—every one in the house rose. He stood there in an attitude of loyalty almost devotional, while that stirring air was played; and then, as though he had done more than he had covenanted—retired.

On another occasion at Birmingham, when his theatrical affairs were in a very disastrous condition, he again conjured successfully with the same charm. He had announced

a "Bohemian, of unexampled Strength and Stature," who, amongst other evolutionary feats, would display his facile manipulation of a huge stone, of near a ton weight, which he was to handle like a tennis-ball! The "Bohemian" was stated as having been received with favor and distinction in various Rhenish States, and had actually felled an ox by a blow of his naked fist, to lighten the *ennui* of a German princess.

"The *Bohemian*, 'begot of nothing but vain phantasy,' being, in other words, the offspring of the manager's imagination, might indeed fairly have been denominated a prodigy. Typical of himself, the 'Bohemian' was advertised in gigantic letters, while sundry portraits, which had been originally executed for the proprietors of the 'Saracen's Head' Inn, London, were placarded about the town, with the sub-lineation, 'THE BOHEMIAN!'

"The Birmingham people, who were beginning to sicken at tragedy, were wonderfully revived by this extimulation; the Bohemian, with his fist, was certainly 'a hit,' and the edifice was as full on the night of his promised appearance as though the Emperor of Austria himself had been expected. The play, 'Pizarro,' had but a poor chance—'The Bohemian! The Bohemian!' from the tongues of the spectators, completely drowned the words of the actors,—which, with considerable foresight, they had only half studied for the occasion. Down fell the curtain, and 'The Bohemian!' instantaneously broke out with fresh violence. The fiddlers struck up 'The Battle of Prague,' and every nerve was now attuned to the pancratic efforts which had been promised.

"At this juncture, Elliston, pale with consternation, which would have extorted pity from the original Saracen himself, stepped forward, and, with suppliant palms, addressed the assembly:

"'The Bohemian has deceived me!' said he—'*that* I could have pardoned; but he has deceived my friends—he has deceived *you!*'—at which he buried his face in his handkerchief; but to hide what emotion we will not hazard a guess. 'The Bohemian, I repeat, has deceived us—*he is not here;*' a certain smouldering now agitated the body of spectators. Elliston went on—'And the man, *of whatever name or nation he may be*, who violates his word, commits an offence which——' here an outbreak took place which completely annihilated the rest of his aphoristic sentence. He then proceeded:

"'Anxious for your gratification, I entered into correspondence with the faithless foreigner, who was this day to have appeared.' (A yell, which, in another place, would be denominated *ironical cheers.*) 'The correspondence, ladies and gentlemen, is in my pocket.' (An incredulous laugh.) 'I'll read it to you.' Here he produced a variety of papers resembling letters. ('Read! read!—No! no!—Imposition!') 'Here they are,' continued Elliston, with one of his most cunning looks; 'does any gentleman present read German?—if so, would he honor me by stepping forward?' (A scream of merriment.) 'Am I left alone? Then I'll translate it for you.' ('No! no! enough! Go on, Elliston!') 'I obey; the correspondence shall *not* be read'—here he deliberately replaced the bundle in his pocket—'but, ladies and gentlemen,' continued he, with a smile which could have leveled the Andes, 'the *stone* is here! You shall see it!' (A volcanic burst.) 'You shall yet be satisfied; you are my patrons, and have a right to demand it. Shall the stone be produced?' (Cries of 'The stone! the stone!') Here the manager winked his gray eye at the fiddlers, who again hastily betook themselves to 'The Battle of Prague,' when up sprang the curtain, disclosing a sand-rock, which, for weight and

magnitude, would positively have made 'Bonemia nothing!' and bearing a scroll, '*This is the stone!*' Good-humor, even confidence, seemed restored. Here was indeed *the stone*, and imagination did all the rest."

The variety of his extravagance was always infinite. On one occasion he announced to his surprised patrons, that he had been given to understand that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent would confer on him the honor of knighthood, and that when he next appeared before them the bill would probably run "Sir John Falstaff by *Sir Robert Elliston*." There was no doubt he was sincere in these extraordinary flourishes, and that when he found himself for the moment the centre of attraction, the lights, the faces diverted to him, he felt himself transported into a sort of fairy realm, where all things possible became real, and his loftiest and most soaring dreams assumed consistence. The little brief authority in which he was dressed seemed to stretch beyond the walls of the theatre. A most characteristic specimen of his "greater style" was a valedictory address to the Leicester audience. There is a freshness and originality in his turns, and certainly a grandeur which he tempered by condescension. It will be seen how admirably he carried off the want of coherence in such addresses by importing a sort of fervor.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "the painful moment of our separation has arrived. That I have been indulgent to you, there is no denying—some say I have *spoilt* you. It was in this city, ladies and gentlemen, that that remarkable character, Cardinal Wolsey, laid down his glory and his bones. Can I do better than employ his words in honor of our present illustrious Regent? 'He is a prince of a most royal carriage, and hath a princely heart;' to this let me add, God bless him!

"I would remind you that your late worshipful mayor,

Mr. Wilcox, and myself, were schoolfellows. The loss of him, you yourselves cannot deplore more than I do, and now, 'beyond that bourne from which no traveler returns,' we have only to hope that he is happy!" (Here the orator wiped his eyes.) "Ladies and gentlemen, once again I bid you respectfully—affectionately, farewell!"

So when two rival heroines—"the Giroux" and "the Taylor"—engaged together at his Surrey-side theatre, in pantomime, had each their band of admirers, who crowded the house for nightly riots and confusion, the crafty Elliston stimulated the jealousy and partisanship which was so favorable to his treasury. Every night the storm raged; the hackney coaches of the hostile fair ones were attended to the stage door by mobs, and saluted with cheers and hisses, while within the theatre fierce battles were fought. Elliston, enchanted at the opportunities thus offered, was in his element, speeching from the stage, and inflaming while he affected to control. An appeal which "the Giroux" made to her admirers was known to have been the manager's composition. It is Ellistonian all over.

"SURREY THEATRE.

"Miss Giroux, deeply deploring the display of a spirit in this theatre which, however flattering, is by no means calculated to serve her who is the object of it, presumes publicly to declare that she has, neither personally nor otherwise, encouraged any hostility to the professional pretensions of a young person called Taylor.

"Miss Giroux takes the liberty to request that the enlightened portion of the British public, which does her the honor to approve her performances, will add to so proud a distinction the favor of abstaining from an unseemly contest, nor

'Mix with hired slaves, bravos, and common stabbers;'

but allow, at once, MIND to triumph over MATTER!

"N.B.—Miss Giroux is not aware, that in this generous nation it is disreputable to be either a Jew or a foreigner; but attempts have been made to fix on her the *stigma* of both! Miss Giroux is by no means a Jew, and has the happiness, moreover, of being born an English young lady."

When he thought matters had gone far enough, and the excitement was beginning to flag, he came forward and announced that "on the following night *he would himself give judgment in the case!*" And when he appeared on this important occasion, he called haughtily to the prompter, "Bring me a chair!" and a sort of judicial throne was placed for him, into which he sank, and began gravely to "sum up." Burlesque could not farther go—but on the rude natives of the "Surrey side" such fine irony was thrown away. Their coarse natures could only appreciate vulgar matter of fact. The "giving judgment in the case" was scarcely found intelligible, and produced fresh uproar. For many more nights manager and mob contended with each other in extravagance and riot, until the confusion became a nuisance to the neighborhood, and the authorities were compelled to interfere.

The story oftenest told to illustrate the magnificence of his self-delusion, was the one associated with the dramatic pageant which he got up at Drury Lane in honor of the King's coronation. It was sumptuously produced, and extraordinarily successful. The excitement, the applause, the handsome coronation robes which he wore—Elliston represented his Majesty—and the elaborate theatrical state, all in his honor—coextensive in some degree with his actual authority as the employer or master of all these stage mercenaries—combined to settle the delusion in his wits that

he was the King! As the roars of applause burst from the packed galleries and pit, and the stately monarch came down to the front, last in the procession, he felt himself transported with pride and gratitude, and said aloud, "*Bless ye my people!*" He later struck a medal for distribution among the audience, in imitation of the greater precedent at Westminster.

It was curious to note how lofty a dignity, with something approaching to meanness, were found in this singular character. Yet there seemed to be nothing inconsistent in this combination, both extremes being in harmony with the nature of Robert William Elliston. He ranged from the full-blown dignity of lessee of one of the great theatres, to the directorship of what was little more than a barn at Buxton, with the same complacency. "It was my fortune," says Lamb, "to encounter him near St. Dunstan's Church on the morning of his election to that high office. Grasping my hand with a look of significance, he only uttered, 'Have you heard the news?'—then with another look following up the blow, he subjoined 'I am the future manager of Drury Lane Theatre.' Breathless as he saw me, he stayed not for congratulation or reply, but mutely stalked away, leaving me to chew upon his new-blown dignities at leisure. In fact, nothing could be said to it. . . . This was in his *great* style." The truth was he was so settled in the conviction of his own elegant superiority, that the mere material accidents of size or state were indifferent to *him*. He lived in the delightful dream that they must also be matters of indifference to those who were content to accept him. Thus in his little booth at Leamington he would treat his "patrons," with a pleasant absence of ceremony, according to his humor, and would invite them to such pieces as "Three Weeks after Marriage," "with only himself, one lady, a couple of amateur tradesmen, and

the doorkeeper's son" to fill the various parts. It was enough that *he* was the entertainment. In another piece, where there was a more serious deficiency, he condescended to greater exertion, and delivered the words of nearly every character. The amateur tradesmen, doorkeeper's son, &c., were enjoined to watch him, to go off, or come on at his signals, while he repeated their portion of the dialogue, as though they were marionettes which he worked. The device was perfectly successful.

A certain decay, however, always attends the career of "pleasant creatures" such as Elliston. There is a toleration of these exuberances—as in the case of Sheridan and Hook—so long as the sense of novelty lasts, but they must then accept degradation, which is all the grosser, because contrasted with their airy natures, fondly supposed to be privileged. On account of some slight arrear in his rent, he was summarily thrust out of his great theatre at Drury. This at least was the pretext, though it is probable that the amateur directors, the Douglas Kinnairds and the rest, were eager to close their connection with one who indulged in such curious antics. The deposed monarch submitted with dignity to his altered state, and retired to his old house on the Surrey-side. It was there that he told Douglas Jerrold, who was pressing for some remuneration on the astounding success of "Black-eyed Susan"—which had run over two hundred nights—that "he ought *to get his friends* to present him with a piece of plate." This has often been told in this detached shape, as a specimen of the ingratitude and rapaciousness of managers. But how different does it appear when read in connection with the character we have just been considering. It is really appropriate, and in an Elliston not unfeeling. It was the airy speech of a gay gentleman in comedy—some Chesterfield on the stage.

Nothing daunted by his reverse he gave his little senate

laws from the boards of the Surrey. Here he again speeched and descanted.

"On one evening," says Mr. Raymond,* "pending the representation of a very serious piece, a sailor elevated, in every sense of the word, frequently interrupted the progress of the play, and annoyed the audience by exclamations of dissatisfaction and sundry noises peculiar to gentlemen of the sea. At length Elliston appeared on the stage:—

"'May I know the cause of this unseemly clamor?' asked he.

"(*Voice from the gallery*).—'It's this here sailor what makes the row.'

"'A British sailor!—the glory of our country's annals!—the safeguard of our homes and families! What is it he asks?'

"'Rule Britannia!' roared the tar.

"'You shall have it!' emphatically pronounced the manager. 'Of what ship, comrade?'

"'The *Haggermemnon*,' again roared our son of Neptune.

"'Ladies and gentlemen,' continued the manager, advancing a few steps forward with imperturbable assurance, 'on Monday next, a nautical, national, allegorical sketch will be represented at this theatre, entitled, "The British Flag!" in which the whole strength of the company will be employed. The music expressly composed by Mr. Blewitt. Give 'em "Rule Britannia,"' concluded he, with a nod to the musicians. 'Bring your companions here on Monday,' cried Elliston, with a wink at the sailor, which having done, he strode off the stage."

"Rule Britannia" was immediately sung "by the whole strength of the company," and the play was resumed. As to the nautical sketch, it is needless to say this was *the momentary suggestion of the manager's untiring fancy.*

"On another evening too many persons having been

* In his pleasant memoir from which is taken much of this article.

admitted to the gallery, occasioned much altercation, and totally prevented the performers from being heard.

"Elliston came forward as usual, and thus addressed the audience:—

"'Ladies and gentlemen,—I take the liberty of addressing you. It is of rare occurrence that I deem it necessary to place myself in juxtaposition with you. (*Noise in the gallery.*) When I said juxtaposition, I meant *vis-à-vis*. (*Increased noise in the gallery.*) When I uttered the words *vis-à-vis*, I meant *contactability*. Now let me tell you that *vis-à-vis* (it is a French term) and contactability (which is a truly English term) very nearly assimilate to each other. (*The disturbance above redoubled.*) Gentlemen!—Gentlemen! I am really ashamed of your conduct. It is unlike a Surrey audience. Are you aware that I have in this establishment most efficient peace-officers at my immediate disposal? Peace-officers, gentlemen, mean persons necessary in time of war.

"'One word more,' said he, returning; 'if that tall gentleman, in the carpenter's cap, will sit down [pointing to the pit], the little girl behind him, in red ribbons (you, my love, I mean), will be able to see the entertainment.'

"This oration produced the desired effect, and Elliston, after bowing most respectfully, as he always did when he had made an impudent speech, retired to spend his *afternoon*."

Even drunkenness used to affect him in a highly fantastic way, and was different from the intoxication of ordinary men. It was more like the freaks of extravagance. No such singular scene as the following could be conceived.

"The 2d of May was fixed for a royal visit to the theatre. The King had held a drawing-room at Buckingham Palace on the morning of this day, and a few untoward events, added to the fatigue consequent on the ceremony, found his Majesty not in the most serene temper of mind

on his return to Carlton House. By the King's desire, however, the captain of the escort, Lord William Lennox, rode immediately abreast the window of the royal carriage; an arrangement wisely made, for, on the morning, as the august party were passing the entrance to the stable-yard, a missile was projected at the King's person, which struck the captain of the escort. The gallant captain, however, shook his plumes, and all was well again.

"The rush into the theatre was tremendous. Considerable uproar, from various parts of the house, ensued, on disputed seats and packed benches, which, just as the King entered his box, being at spring-tide, his Majesty felt impressed was chiefly directed towards his own person. The Lord Chamberlain at once perceived the King's feeling, and instantly requested his vice-official, the Marquess Graham, to descend, and at once see the manager, that the uproar might be appeased by explanation. Lord Graham now hastened to the stage, where, meeting Elliston in full costume, and totally forgetting he was accosting a *crowned head*, exclaimed—

"'Mr. Elliston, this is disgraceful! You should have prevented this excess. The King is vexed, and will never again come to Drury Lane.'

"This speech, addressed as it was with considerable acrimony to Elliston, surrounded by many distinguished strangers and followers of the court, besides troops of his *own subjects*, very sensibly nettled him. He replied with equal warmth, but ten times greater dignity; when, at that moment, espying Lord William Lennox, he added—

"'Now, my Lord Graham, I have a friend; my wounded honor I shall place in the hands of Lord William;' which having said, he sweepingly led the way across the stage into his own private room; the captain of the guard following. Lord William *en cuirass*; Elliston 'with his sword

by his side;' full bottles and empty bottles—the long-necked Champagne and the rush-covered Curaçoa—plays, poetry, and the 'London Gazette'—fans, tippets, and handkerchiefs 'of the smallest spider's web,' formed the strangest confusion of effects.

"Elliston now entered grandiloquently into the nature of his grievances; but his friend soon perceiving that, though the vice-chamberlain might have wounded the dignity of the manager, Moët had clearly disordered his wits; he gave him, therefore, certain advice, which produced the following:

"'You are right, my lord. The *deputy* has affronted me, and a *deputy* shall reply to it. My stage-manager shall take up the question in its present shape. I shall meet no one but the Lord Chamberlain himself. My lord, a glass of Madeira?'

"The curtain had fallen on the night's entertainment—the King had returned to Carlton House—the escort to the Horse Guards; and it being now one o'clock of the following morning, the captain had doffed his leathern pantaloons and huge jack-boots, preparing himself for repose, when a sharp knock was heard at his chamber door.

"'Who's there?' interrogated the captain, not a little disinclined to intrusion at such an hour.

"'One of his Majesty's secretaries of state, my lord, on urgent business,' replied the sergeant.

"'What can it mean?' murmured the Horse Guardsman.

"'I know not, my lord, but he said it was on business—"vital," I think was the word. The gentleman is now in the sitting-room.'

"To the sitting-room Lord William immediately proceeded, when he beheld, seated in an arm-chair, no less a personage than the monarch of Drury Lane—King William Elliston! in the same court gear in which he had a few

hours before attended the monarchy of Great Britain ; but a little damaged.

"'I have taken the liberty,' observed Elliston, in a manner even more impressive than his usual delivery, 'during your lordship's delay, of ordering a weak glass of brandy and water from the canteen.'

"Here the manager paused to sip his mixture. 'My lord, we must go out this very morning—I am steady to my purpose,' added he, reeling actually in his chair.

"Lord William now perceived that a confused recollection of Lord Graham's affront had brought Elliston, drunk as a lord, from the theatre to the Horse Guards: there to renew the story, and pass the remainder of a quiet evening.

"Lord William now pursued the same policy he had taken in the manager's room; namely, representing that it was utterly impossible the monarch of Drury Lane could go out with any deputy whatever; and that, if he did, so far from his honor being vindicated, it would be more deeply involved.

"To this Elliston listened as to a perfectly new proposition, and fixing his eyes steadily on Lord William during a very lengthened pause—at last said—

"'But, my lord—there is one question yet.'

"'Name it by all means.'

"'Might I suggest one more tumbler of brandy and water?'

"Lord William gave assent for a replenish of the glass, which the canteen man, having an eye to business, presently supplied.

"Elliston having liberally tasted of this 'refresher,' committed himself to the confidence of another pause, after which he said—

"'And now, my lord, I would beg to ask, in which of the royal parks do you propose the meeting?'

"'Windsor, by all means,' replied the captain—'and what will be still more fitting, you shall fight under "Herne's Oak," and so make Shakespeare himself one of the party.'

"Elliston gazed for a moment, perfectly overcome by the sublimity of the proposition, and then, with a very 'fargone' *impressement* of manner, exclaimed—

"'Herne's Oak! admirable! my lord—and my Lord Graham shall remember the words of Master Page, "There be many who do *fear* to walk by this Herne's Oak!"'—when up he rose.

"'Can I assist you, Elliston?' asked Lord William, offering him his cocked hat, and disentangling his sword from his silken legs.

"'By no means,' replied Elliston; 'but your man is a long time about *this* tumbler of brandy and water.'

"'Nay, nay,' cried Lord William, again laughing, 'you forget—you have already dispatched it; and really, as it is very late——'

"'True, true!' interrupted Elliston, drawing out his watch, and looking at the reverse side of it; 'we must be going—Lord Graham will be punctual—hair triggers, my lord—and my hand is steady as iron.'

"'Hush! Do you know what day this is?—Sunday morning.'

"'Then,' said Elliston, 'your man is the more reprehensible in his delay of mixing this brandy and water.'

"After some further difficulty, the manager was placed in the hackney-coach. 'You'll follow, my lord?' said he, in a confidential whisper.

"'Certainly.'

"'Then, I am content. To Shooter's Hill!' exclaimed the manager to the coachman—and off he drove.

"The next morning, or rather that very morning, by ten

o'clock, Robert William Elliston, in full possession of his energies, and far more alive to business than many about him, was at his writing-table."

In the course of the morning the following letter reached him:—

"Chamberlain's Office, May 3.

"SIR,—

"I regret to have heard that you felt hurt at some expression I used towards you last evening. This was far from my intention, my only object being to induce you to take some means which would remedy the disorder in the pit of the theatre; as well as the annoyance which it was to his Majesty, and the rest of the audience. I feel sorry that you should have misconceived me so as to suppose I would intentionally have said anything disagreeable to you.

"I remain, Sir, your obedient,

"GRAHAM."

It was after he had come to this sad complexion, that he was so present to Charles Lamb, whose vivid sketch of him finds its illustration in the little stories just narrated.—"My acquaintance," he wrote, "with the pleasant creature whose loss we all deplore, was but slight.

"But was he less *great* when in melancholy after-years, again, much near the same spot, I met him, when that sceptre had been wrested from his hand and his dominion was curtailed to the petty managership, and part-proprietorship, of the small Olympic, *his Elba?* He still played nightly upon the boards of Drury, but in parts, alas! allotted to him, not magnificently distributed by him. Waiving his great loss as nothing, and magnificently sinking the sense of fallen *material* grandeur in the more liberal resentment of depreciations done to his more lofty *intellectual* pretensions, 'Have you heard' (his customary exordium),

—'have you heard,' said he, 'how they treat me? they put me in *comedy*.' Thought I—but his finger on his lips forbade any verbal interruption—'where could they have put you better?' Then, after a pause— 'where I formerly played Romeo, I now play Mercutio,'—and so again he stalked away, neither staying, nor caring for, responses.

"O, it was a rich scene—but Sir Astley Cooper, the best of storytellers and surgeons, who mends a lame narrative almost as well as he sets a fracture, alone could do justice to it—that I was witness to, in the tarnished room (that had once been green) of that same little Olympic. There, after his deposition from imperial Drury, he substituted a throne. That Olympic Hill was his 'highest heaven;' himself, 'Jove in his chair.' There he sat in state, while before him, on complaint of the prompter, was brought for judgment—how shall I describe her?—one of those little tawdry things that flirt at the tails of choruses —a probationer for the town, in either of its senses—the pertest little drab—a dirty fringe and appendage of the lamps' smoke—who, it seems, on some disapprobation expressed by a 'a highly respectable' audience, had precipitately quitted her station on the boards, and withdrawn her small talents in disgust.

"'And how dare you,' said her manager—assuming a censorial severity which would have crushed the confidence of a Vestris, and disarmed that beautiful rebel herself of her professional caprices—I very believe, he thought *her* standing before him—'how dare you, madam, withdraw yourself, without a notice, from your theatrical duties?' 'I was hissed, sir.' 'And you have the presumption to decide upon the taste of the town?' 'I don't know that, sir, but I will never stand to be hissed,' was the subjoinder of young Confidence. When gathering up his features into one significant mass of wonder, pity, and expostulatory

indignation—in a lesson never to have been lost upon a creature less forward than she who stood before him—his words were these: 'They have hissed *me*.'

"'Quite an Opera pit,' he said to me, as he was courteously conducting me over the benches of his Surrey Theatre, the last retreat, and recess of his every-day-waning grandeur.

"Those who knew Elliston, will know the *manner* in which he pronounced the latter sentence of the few words I am about to record. One proud day to me, he took his roast mutton with us in the Temple, to which I had superadded a preliminary haddock. After a rather plentiful partaking of the meagre banquet, not unrefreshed with the humbler sort of liquors, I made a sort of apology for the humility of the fare, observing that for my own part I never ate but one dish at dinner. 'I too never eat but one thing at dinner'—was his reply—then after a pause—'reckoning fish as nothing.' The manner was all. It was as if by one peremptory sentence he had decreed the annihilation of all the savory esculents which the pleasant and nutritious food-giving Ocean pours forth upon poor humans from her watery bosom."

But the most quaint and farcical of his schemes was the opening of what he called a "Literary Association" at Bristol. What special twist in what Mr. Shandy would call his "pericraniacks" suggested this notion, it would be difficult to say: yet somehow it seems in harmony with his character. He might wish to stretch beyond his profession: to play the graceful *littérateur*, a part in which he felt that he could not hope to win credit otherwise than by professing it in this tangible shape. This institution which he thus grandly named was, in more sober phrase, a Circulating Library. The premises had been a pickle shop, which he recklessly purchased for the sum of £1600. The

back parlor he styled THE LYCEUM, which he invited all that was refined and literary in Bristol to frequent, so as to acquire a "sweetness and light" that was sadly wanting to the commercial society of Bristol. This odd speculation was specially Ellistonian—no works of the ordinary pattern being admitted, the accomplished director laying out large sums in the purchase not merely of the old classical writers, but of black-letter volumes, so that the collection should be of a solid and important character. Antiquarian works of the profoundest sort—old travels of the early navigators—rare editions of English plays, were the inappropriate treasures secured for the heterogeneous collection: the collector we may be sure justifying each addition with flowing comments that must have been amusing to listen to. Not to neglect other departments of knowledge, he also gathered in a quantity of fossils, shells, Indian curiosities, arms, &c. (the invariable, but somewhat depressing, features of nearly every museum), and hung up with a sort of pleased triumph, the cynosure—a CHINESE GONG.—No wonder, it must be said again, that Charles Lamb was infinitely interested by such a character—which would have figured well in a comedy.

He was enthusiastic in the scheme, but as might be expected, the back-parlor "Lyceum" remained empty. It was probably considered an eccentricity. It failed—a broken schoolmaster of the name of Orrick who was in charge, going off with such cash as there was in the concern. Yet with the airy projector, we may be certain it always remained a success—under the qualification that it had done all that he had intended, the seed being sown, &c. Indeed, he presently started another venture of the same kind at Leamington Spa, though, taught by experience, he conceded something to the practical spirit of business. A ragged collection of novels was got together,

with which a meagre effort in the direction of stationery, &c., was combined. The whole was placed under the direction of his two sons. This sudden diversion—from the extreme æsthetic to sober prose and the concrete—was quite in keeping. Hither he would repair, as though to relax from greater cares, and even assist in the shop;—and, ever *acting*, thus offer to the Leamingtonian ladies the spectacle of one of his degree, and graceful bearing, stooping to such condescension. His first introduction to Lamb was upon this occasion. "E., whom nothing misbecame—to auspicate, I suppose, the filial concern, and set it going with a lustre—was serving in person two damsels fair, who had come into the shop, ostensibly to inquire for some new publication, but in reality to have a sight of the illustrlous shopman, hoping some conference. With what air did he reach down the volumes, dispassionately giving his opinion upon the work in question, and launching out into a dissertation on its comparative merits with those of certain publications of a similar stamp, its rival! his enchanted customers fairly hanging on his lips, subdued to the authoritative sentence. So have I seen a gentleman in comedy *acting* the shopman."

A pleasant *pendant* is Mr. Raymond's sketch of the elegant "shopman."

"One morning he descended early into his shop, and looking round with the irresistible humor of *Tangent* himself, 'It is my cruel fate,' said he, 'that my children will be gentlemen.' And, on his two sons making their appearance, they beheld their father, in an old dapple gray frock-coat, dusting the books, arranging the ink-bottles, repiling the quires of 'Bath post,' and altering the position of the China mandarins, with the veriest gravity in the world. One of the first customers that came in was a short, dirty-faced drab of a maid-servant, who brought

some books to be exchanged; and nearly at the same moment, a sniveling charity-boy, with a large patch of diachylon across his nose, placed himself at the counter, demanding other articles.

"'One at a time,' said *Octavian*, with petrifying solemnity. 'Now, madam?' pursued he, turning to the runt.

"'Missus a' sent back these here, and wants summut 'orrible.'

"'The lady's name?' demanded Elliston.

"'Wiwian,' grunted the girl.

"'With a V or a W?' asked Elliston with the same solemnity; but the wench only grinned; when up mounted *Sir Edward Mortimer* the ladder placed against his shelves, and withdrawing two wretchedly-torn volumes, clapped them together to liberate the dust, and placing them in the grubby claws of the now half-frightened girl —'There,' said he, 'a work of surpassing terror; and now, sir,' turning to the boy, 'I will attend to *you*.'

"The lad, who had by this time nearly pulled the plaster from his visage, owing to the nervous state of agitation into which he had been thrown, could not at the precise moment recollect his mission; when Elliston repeated with the intonation of a Merlin, 'And now, sir, I will attend to *you*.'

"'Half a quire of outsides and three ha'porth o' mixed wafers,' screamed the urchin, throwing fourpence-halfpenny on the counter.

"'Outsides,' repeated Elliston to his son William; 'mixed wafers,' said he in the same tone to Henry.

"*Doricourt* then demanded the paste-pot. Taking the brush, he first deliberately dabbed the lad's nose, thereby replacing the fallen diachylon; and then seizing a watering-pot, much to the merriment of a few strangers who were by this time collected about the shop, began sprinkling the

steps of his library door. Having played a few further antics, the 'Great Lessee' retired to answer his numerous London correspondents on the stupendous affairs of Drury Lane."

To strangers, whom he wished to impress with the dignity of his position, his bearing seemed singular: but beneath it was a method and a meaning, though of a far-fetched, Ellistonian kind. Of this an odd illustration is recorded.

A gentleman of considerable merit as a Provincial actor once called by appointment at Drury Lane Theatre. He found Mr. Elliston, who had then the management, giving some directions on the stage, and was welcomed by him with great politeness. The manager, however, thinking from the conversation which had passed, that the gentleman in question did not seem sufficiently impressed with the greatness of the person whom he was addressing, took this method of displaying his power and consequence. "Yes, sir," said Mr. Elliston, continuing the conversation previously commenced, with a slow and solemn enunciation, "the drama—is now—at its lowest ebb: and—" then suddenly breaking off, in a loud, emphatic voice he called, "First night watchman!" The man stepped forward, and making his bow, stood for orders. "And," resuming to the actor, "unless a material change—" again breaking off, he called—"Other night watchman!" with a peculiar emphasis. The call was obeyed as before—"a material change —I say—takes place—as Juvenal justly—Prompter!" The prompter came—"as Juvenal justly observes—Boxkeeper, dress circle, right hand! But, sir, a reaction must take place when—*Other* boxkeepers!" They came up—"Sir, I say there must be a reaction—Copyist! Call-boy!" Having collected all these personages about him without any apparent object, he turned to the actor, and saying in a slow magisterial tone, "Follow me," retired in a very

dignified manner, leaving the minions of his power to guess what he wanted.*

But it is the Ellistonian advertisements that afford the richest entertainment. These are not to be classed with the artificial and vulgar allurements of the ordinary and conventional claptraps, in which their author has but small faith, save as a useful means of decoying the public. In Elliston's case, the charm is the perfect genuineness of these flourishes: he was addressing his public as he would address them from the stage: they were part of his "grand manner." He believed that these strange flourishings had a certain power: it was his fashion of working on those whom he addressed. Nothing too is more entertaining than the curious phrases, the strange inferences, and the abnormal English, not so much ignorance as the result of the grand and pompous confusion within. Thus are the mere prosaic elements, the object and aim of such advertisement, viz., the vulgar money objects, lifted into dignity by being connected with the loftiest associations. As when the "Free list is suspended," not because of the crowds, &c., but lest the immortal Shakespeare "*should meet with opponents!*" A new piece cannot be produced on the day announced, and we hear the manager confidentially assuring his patrons, "that it must, in consequence of *an unexpected difficulty*, be postponed for a few days;" thus conveying a sense of mystery, of possibly secret influences at work, and asking for friendly confidence in himself.

It was when he took the reins at Drury Lane that he abandoned his grotesque advertisements and assumed this grand style. The centre of his play-bill,† which was the

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* "Monthly Magazine."

† The Editor has gone over the vast collection of play-bills in the British Museum, with a view to a selection of some piquant passages. Nothing

emphatic part of his communication, was printed in a flaming red type that contrasted effectively with the familiar rich black of the rest. This was his great official mode of communicating with his friends, and thus were conveyed meaning hints as to the future, suspicions, and, above all, lofty declarations of success. Thus, having secured Miss Wilson the vocalist, he assures the public in these red characters, "that *in* the determination to make the operatic company of this establishment superior *to every former precedent*, it is now with *equal pleasure and satisfaction* that the proprietor has to," &c. The young lady appeared; and Elliston on the following evening announced that "Miss Wilson made her first appearance yesterday evening, &c. The unbiased opinion of the most brilliant, overflowing, and admiring audience that ever graced a Theatre Royal, and the enthusiastic fervor that accompanied the opera throughout, justifies the proprietor," in giving out the piece for repetition until further notice?—no—that was left to ordinary managers, but "in congratulating the musical world on this vast accession of talent, and to (sic) announce that," &c. A few days after he says that, "the enthusiasm is beyond *every former precedent*. Not an order has been or will be given by the manager during Miss Wilson's engagement. The public decision has therefore been entirely unbiased, and their admiration of the united talents engaged is confirmed by a demand for places, not exceeded by the most popular performances of the most prosperous period of this establishment."

Again, in red letters, a day or two later: "The enthusiasm which has been manifested," as before, &c.—"The general voice has decided upon her merits, and has demon-

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more entertaining can be conceived than the review of this strange gallery of eccentricity.

strated itself in applause of the most generous *and exhilarating fervor*. Not an order," &c., as before.

"P.S. Every seat in the Theatre was occupied before seven o'clock on Tuesday evening, and hundreds were disappointed in their desire to obtain a seat in the Boxes!"

Once more: "The opera continues its triumphant career. It is *an absolute fact* that at this moment there are more than THREE THOUSAND PLACES taken of Mr. Rodwell, the Box Bookkeeper," &c. Producing later a comedy and a melodrama, he says of the latter: "The new Melodrama is the most successful piece *that was ever produced!!!*"—It, however, had but moderate success. The Comedy he says, "was for the second time received with undiminished effect."—It would be the pride of the establishment "should the comedies of this Theatre be esteemed worthy of that *pre-eminent situation* the operatic company has attained."—One of his delightful forms of self-gratulation ran as follows: "and, without modestly adverting to the days of Garrick, the managers trust that their present and future efforts will, *without any temporary gasconade of the non-admission of orders*, be," &c.—This curious inversion is significant of the Elliston mind, and the "temporary gasconade" is specially charming. Such faint qualifications of his lofty declarations were tributes reluctantly paid, *ex gratiâ*, to the conventional forms of society. They were indeed scarcely qualifications at all. Thus where the success of another piece had been decreed—for, as we have seen, the great man decided on this point, and even where a play had failed, gave judgment against the audience—he says it "met with a reception honorable to the industry, *as it is hoped*, of the establishment. It depended *on its best basis*, a powerful natural effect upon the feelings of the audience, and this is considered by the manager (*perhaps solely*) the best *medium to* the real patronage of the public." Here the

"best basis," and "the medium to the real patronage," are admirable; but the placid qualification, "*perhaps solely*" would be most to the taste of a mind like Elia's.

But it was "The Coronation" that brought out all his eccentric power, and he literally reveled in the florid proclamations of that spectacle. It was given out that "*a fac-simile* of the real ceremonial was in preparation and would be announced in a few days, with a prefatory new comedy." Suddenly Edmund Kean appeared in England, and was secured as a fresh attraction by the clever Lessee.—The Coronation would "keep," while the great tragedian was duly celebrated with the usual flourishing "red letters," most "tumultuous applause ever known," &c.—But the audience were kept in mind of the grand pageant that was preparing by sundry nods and whispers. The preparations were all the time "proceeding with the greatest activity, but as they have extended beyond the first intention, the theatre must be closed on Tuesday; and on Wednesday the Procession and all the paraphernalia, &c., will certainly," &c.—It was given out too that every one who had taken part in the real ceremony had been consulted.—When it was presented, "overflowing and delighted audiences nightly *recognize and acknowledge* the Coronation as the most correct and splendid exhibition ever," &c.

Hazlitt took issue on these rhodomontades, and boldly said that the theatre "did *not* overflow," and that the audiences were rather meagre. This was as nothing to our airy manager, who with his fanciful eye saw the vast crowds, mistily depicted, much as such a gathering is shadowed upon a "flat scene" on the modern stage. But his most ingeniously expressed pretext for not withdrawing it, to make place for one already announced, is well worthy being commemorated. The piece, he owned, had been promised, "but the demand for Boxes by families, *and a*

*conviction that the complicated scenery employed* in this splendid exhibition *cannot, when once laid aside*, be replaced under a considerable time, has induced the manager," &c. Another show "being now *established* as the most gorgeous exhibition of scenic effect, *united with interest*, ever submitted to public opinion, it will be," &c. —Here should be marked by students of the grand, the parenthetic, careless way in which this panegyric is given, —i.e. "*being* now established ;" "scenic effect united with interest" is a good touch: while a vulgar hand would have been content with "submitted to the public," instead of to "public opinion." How much, too, was insinuated by the description of a *piece* which, though received with "tumultuous approbation," had yet encountered hostility —a reception thus glanced at: "Every *factitious* (no doubt "factious") opposition previously organized being completely overpowered—the numerous communications on this subject that have been received *will, in due time, be brought before the public.*"

This sort of life did not last long. Dissipation altered his appearance, his figure and fine face showing fearful evidences of decay. All intelligence passed from that speaking face, and the elasticity of his step was gone.

It was at this very period that this most eccentric and extraordinary man contemplated two of the greatest projects of his life. Visionary and wild as they were, he yet followed them up for a time with an ardor which puzzled all physiological inquiry ; a *second marriage* was the one, and a *seat in parliament* the other !

"His senatorial dream was a vision of no mean character. With the proceeds of 'Black-eyed Susan,' and the richer sum of his personal endowments, he proposed canvassing some western borough, and was actually in correspondence with parliamentary agents on the question. *Surrey*, cer-

tainly he had twice represented, and was still a sitting member; and had the franchise been extended at this time to the metropolitan boroughs, we are not quite clear how far his exertions might have led him towards success. The senatorial project, however, expired in the cradle of its birth—namely, the back-parlor of our hero in Blackfriars Road."

The marriage was an idea as eccentric—the object of his attentions being an elderly lady, oldest of three sisters, but who after all preliminaries were settled, declined to ally herself without bringing her two relatives into the family. A little later he was seized with apoplexy, and to the end maintained his character, "talking in a confused manner, and blessing his friends in the most placid and resigned manner."

On the 8th of July, 1831, he expired. Lamb wrote his epitaph—one of his happiest papers:—

"What new mysterious lodgings dost thou tenant now? or when may we expect thy aërial house-warming?

"Tartarus we know, and we have read of the Blessed Shades; now cannot I intelligibly fancy thee in either.

"There by the neighboring moon mayst thou not still be acting thy managerial pranks, great disembodied Lessee? but still, and still a Manager.

"In Green-rooms, impervious to mortal eye, the muse beholds thee wielding posthumous empire.

"Thin ghosts of Figurantes (never plump on earth) circle thee in endlessly, and still their song is *Fye on sinful Fantasy*.

"Magnificent were thy capriccios on this globe of earth, Robert William Elliston! for as yet we know not thy new name in heaven.

"It irks me to think, that, stripped of thy regalities, thou shouldst ferry over, a poor forked shade, in crazy

Stygian wherry. Methinks I hear the old boatman, paddling by the weedy wharf, with raucid voice, bawling, 'SCULLS, SCULLS:' to which, with waving hand, and majestic action, thou deignest no reply, other than in two curt monosyllables, 'NO: OARS.'

"But the laws of Pluto's kingdom know small difference between king and cobbler; manager and call-boy; and, if haply your dates of life were conterminant, you are quietly taking your passage, cheek by cheek (O ignoble leveling of Death), with the shade of some recently departed candle-snuffer."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### GERALD GRIFFIN.*

DURING the last century it was a common incident in literary life, that a young man of "parts" and ability should be encouraged by the praises of his friends to put his poem or tragedy in his pocket, and set off, with some slender pittance, to try his fortune in London. Everything seemed rose-colored, and the raptures of the village or country town critics might reasonably be looked for, if in less exuberant shape, from the more competent judges of the great metropolis. A certain amount of struggle and toil was to be expected: but this would be cheerfully undergone, and welcomed as a wholesome discipline.

The reality was very different, and there is a dismal uniformity in the story of such poor adventurers; who in a few very rare instances reached to favor, and to com-

* Born 1803, died 1840.

petence, which the same amount of labor and purpose in another walk of life would have made a handsome fortune. But the great proportion, hopelessly committed to their task-work, sank into the condition of booksellers' hacks, and worked out their "time" in starvation or gin. These formed the great colony of Grub Street.

Still, just as the day laborer was nearly always secure of some wage, however miserable, so the hack might reckon on work of some description from the bookseller, on the usual "sweater's terms"—two guineas for a translated novel, and the like. But the playwriter's case might seem desperate. There were but two theatres open, rarely three: and the collection of Garrick's letters shows that the candidate playwriters included every class in the kingdom—clergymen, doctors, soldiers, clerks, shopmen, &c. It thus became a rueful sort of lottery.

This picture, it might be assumed, belonged to the past century, and the most interesting instance of such a struggle is perhaps that of Goldsmith and his friend Johnson. Goldsmith's story, as told so gracefully by Mr. Forster, is almost painful; and it is with some relief that the reader thinks that the days of such miseries are passed away. It is remarkable, however, that within the days of our own generation this story should have been once more repeated, and with circumstances of an almost pathetic interest; and that a young fellow should have started from the banks of the Shannon with a half-written tragedy in his pocket, hoping by the aid of friends, but still more by the claims of his genius, to force booksellers, managers, and actors to give him a hearing. The progress of this illusion, its gradual fading out under the miserable logic of privation, and the clinging to hope, the cheerfulness assumed for the sake of those at home, who were finding the small pittance with which he could hardly keep body and soul together

in the world of London, make up the touching story of Gerald Griffin, told best in his own words.

Before he was twenty he found himself in London with an unfinished tragedy, and one friend, on whom all his hopes rested. This was in the year 1823, and the tale of his troubles is shown in a series of letters to his family.

"My Dear William," he writes, full of enthusiasm, "I have just had rather a long interview with —— at his house, and he has kept the tragedy of 'Aguire' for the purpose of reading it. He asked me what the plot, &c., of the piece was, and promised to give me an answer in the course of next week if possible; at least he said I might depend on the earliest he could give. You may remember some time before I left Ireland, I told you the plot of a tragedy which I at first intended to be called 'The Prodigal Son,' —— (an actor) tells me that it is the name of the new tragedy which Banim has presented, and which has been accepted at Drury Lane. He says he will give me an answer next week; otherwise he cannot promise so soon, so that until then, I can enjoy all the delights of suspense in their fullest force. Every one to whom I showed the play here assured me of its success; among the rest your old friend Mr. W——. I have had a tiresome piece of work since I came, transcribing the play, which I was told was almost illegible. With respect to the situation of reporter it is almost impossible to procure it at present, as the business season has not commenced. That of police reporter is easy enough I believe to be procured, but I am told the office is scarcely reputable. I shall take a report of some matter, and send it to the papers the first opportunity. I have had such harassing work looking after addresses, &c., together with continued writing, and the terrible damp fogs that have prevailed here lately, that I got this week a renewal of my old attacks of chest. I am

however, much better. With respect to the state of my finances, they are getting low. I was put to some expense while looking for lodgings, as my good friend P—— had no bed. If you could spare me a few pounds, I am pretty certain I can do something shortly. At all events write to me, and let me know what you think of my prospects and of what I have done and ought to do."

"My Dear William," he again wrote, on Nov. 22, 1823, "I never experienced until this morning what the pain was of receiving unpleasant news from home. The account which you give of the state of your health was as unexpected as it was distressing. The bill on Sir E. Flyn and Co. I have received. It was entirely too much for you to send me under the circumstances. Half the money would I am sure with economy enable me to get through until I have procured a way of doing something. I have sent some pieces to the New Monthly Magazine, and if they are accepted I intend to offer Colburn the first number of a series of papers. He pays liberally for these contributions. The success of this, however, I do not set much reliance upon. I intend to report the trial of the murderers of Weare, which will come on soon. I am not so sanguine about my prospects as that I could not easily resign myself to a disappointment. Mr. W—— often advises me to avoid it, as he says there are so many mortifications mingle l even with success, that a person who is very sanguine is sure to be disappointed. But among all the dampers I meet, there is not such a finis' ed croaker as a young student at the bar, who is himself a disappointed dramatist, and never meets me without some agreeable foreboding or other. With respect to the taste of a London audience, you may judge what it is when I tell you that 'Venice Preserved' will scarcely draw a decent hous·; while such a piece of unmeaning absurdity as the 'Cataract of the

Ganges' has filled Drury Lane every night these three weeks past. The scenery and decorations, field of battle, burning forest, and cataract of real water, afforded a succession of splendor I had no conception of, but I was heartily tired of the eternal galloping, burning; marching, and counter-marching, and the dull speechifying with which it abounds. A lady on horseback riding up a cataract is rather a bold stroke, but these things are quite the rage now. They are hissed by the gods, but that is a trifle so long as they fill the house and the manager's pockets. I build great hopes out of the burning convent and the thunder-storm, if 'Aguire' should be accepted, as well as a grand procession and chorus which I have introduced in the second act. My dearest William, I hope your next letter will bring me better accounts than that which now lies before me. I have set my happiness if I should succeed, on sharing with you the pleasures and pains of authorship, and if this unfortunate attack should disable you (though I have fervent hopes it may not turn out so serious as you fear), greater success than I can ever hope for would make no amends. Your affectionate and grateful, GERALD GRIFFIN."

"MY DEAR WILLIAM," he wrote on Dec. 29, 1823, "I mentioned to you a few days since, that I had seen Banim. I dined with him on Thursday; there were Mrs. Banim and an Irish gentleman, and we had a pleasant evening enough. He had read 'Aguire' twice. He went over it scene by scene with me, and pointed out all the passages he disliked. He then gave me his candid opinion, which was, that after making those alterations, the play ought to be accepted, and to succeed. He gave it very high praise indeed, especially the third and fourth acts, which he said could not be better. Parts of the others he found fault with. The piece would not suffer by the loss of those passages, as

he thought the acts too long. He recommended me to persevere in writing for the stage, and if I did so, to foreswear roses, dewdrops, and sunbeams forever. The fate of the unfortunate 'Vespers of Palermo' told me this before. Poetry is not listened to on the stage here. I could not on the whole, have expected Banim to act a more friendly or generous part than he has done. On the second day I called on him (Saturday), he made me stop to dinner. I put the direct question to him, whether from what he had seen it was his real opinion that I should be successful as a dramatist. His reply was, that he thought I had every claim, and since I had dealt so candidly with him, he advised me to write on, and that he would do everything for any piece I wished to bring forward, that he would do if it was his own. With respect to the present piece, he advised me to leave it in ——'s hands until he sends it to me and not call or write to him. If he knows anything of him, he says he will keep and play it. I am very sorry I did not see Banim first. In that case I should long since have known its fate, as he could have procured me an answer from the committee in ten days. I have not been able to procure an engagement since I wrote last. It is very difficult to do so. I intend however to make a desperate effort this week, for it must be done before long or not at all. I have got a cold and an ugly cough at present, but my health on the whole is very tolerable. I have been obliged to lay out nearly half the money you sent me, in clothes, as without them I might as well have remained at home. I owe but the last week for my lodgings, but if I cannot get an engagement very shortly, I will give them up altogether, for the rent is too much for me."

Thus far all promised fairly, but the slow and cruel process of *désillusionnement* was now to begin. The little

salves and excuses he finds for this check are almost piteous.

In January, 1824, he wrote:—

"My Dear William, —— has sent me back my piece (I don't like that word rejected), after keeping it nearly three months, without any opinion, other than the mere act of doing so. I had just the day before said to Banim, that I wished he would do it, for I heartily disliked the idea of his being considered my patron if he should accept it. From the description I have received of the manner in which actors deal with those who are brought before the public through their instrumentality, I am in a fine vein for cutting at them. Pope says very truly, they are judges of what is good just as a tailor is of what is graceful. Johnson, that sensible old fellow, always despised them. The fact was of all the introductions I could get, none could have been slighter than that I handed to ——, though I thought it a fine thing at the time. Of all the people I could have applied to, an actor was the least likely to pay me attention; and of all actors I could have selected, —— was the worst: for, you must know he dabbles in tragedy himself; and I suppose you recollect the whisper to Sir Fretful or Puff, (which is it?) in the 'Critic,'—'Never send a piece to Drury'—'Writes himself?' 'I know it, sir.' However, after all this, the piece deserved to be rejected, for it had many and grievous sins. Banim said if I change the name and make those alterations he pointed out, he will present it for me and get me an immediate answer. With a true, indefatigable, Grub Street spirit, I have commenced a new one and have it nearly finished. . . . There is a great dearth of talent in that way at present. You were right in supposing there are a great number of pieces presented at the theatres. Banim tells me he supposes there are no less

than a thousand rejected every year. I was born under some extraordinary planet I believe. You recollect the coincidences I before mentioned to you. A tragedy founded on the story of Aguire and called the Spanish Revenge, has been presented at Covent Garden and rejected. . . . I have been very busy lately, both in writing and endeavoring to procure some regular employment. . . . GERALD GRIFFIN."

Another month and there is a further descent:—

"Feb. 1824. Since I last wrote, I have been making the utmost efforts to secure some immediate way of support, and nevertheless, in that point, still remain in abeyance. Banim, who is very kind to me, can do nothing at present with the press, as those with whom he has influence are all preoccupied. Of the daily or political press he knows nothing. On my calling on him, I believe the day after I wrote to you last, he urged me to alter Aguire, in those passages he pointed out, and told me that he still persevered in his opinion of it: that there were scenes in it which for stage effect and every requisite could not be better. I have conned the play over so often myself, that I don't know what's bad or good in it but as I am told, and therefore found the alterations very troublesome.

"I trust in God that I may be enabled to do something which will prevent my again trespassing on you. I could not economize more rigidly than I do. My lodgings I have still kept, as at that time I owed a little, and if I was to go into new, I should be obliged to pay ready money for some time, and that is not now absolutely necessary where I am; and considering the difference in charge I could procure another for, the advantage I think was on the side of the remaining. I have now shewn you my circumstances. Before another fortnight or three weeks, I think I shall be able to let you know that I have been either

accepted or rejected at the theatres. I find —— has been with you. He left this I believe the very day I received my manuscript. Peace be with him! he has cured me of histrionic patrons."

His distresses were now slowly gathering, and his hopes sinking in the same measure.

In March, he wrote:—

"I must have heartily tired and sickened you before now, and I am sick and tired myself. I had little idea before I left Ireland that it was possible I could be nearly five months in London without doing anything; but it is not through my remissness that has been the case. A very little time longer will tell me all that I have to expect, and I shall then take measures accordingly. I had a visit from Banim the other day. What with the delays and disappointments I have met since I came here, it is only his encouragement, and his friendship that keeps hope alive. I shall write to you again when I know the issue of the play, which I have long since finished."

". . . Banim's friendship I find every day growing more ardent, more cordial if possible. I dined with him on Sunday last. I told you in my last, I had left him four acts of a play, for the purpose of leaving it to his option, to present that or Aguire, I anticipated the preference of the new, and have with him succeeded to my wish. He says it is the best I have written yet, and will be when finished 'a most effective play!' but what gives me the greatest satisfaction respecting it, is the consciousness that I have written an original play. That passion of revenge you know was threadbare. Banim has made some suggestions which I have adopted. I will finish it immediately, place it in his hands, and abide the result in following other pursuits. He advises me to have it presented at Covent Garden, for many reasons. Imprimis they are more liberal;

next Gisippus is a character for Young or Macready; the former I should rather to undertake it, as I have placed the effect of the piece more in pathos than violent passion. He wishes to speak to Young, who is his intimate friend, before he presents it, in order to learn all the Green Room secrets. Young will be in town this week. Banim made me an offer the other day, which will be of more immediate advantage than the tragedy, inasmuch as I need not abide the result. He desired me to write a piece for the English Opera House. When I have it finished he will introduce me to Mr. Arnold of Golden Square, the proprietor, who is his friend, and get me immediate money for it without awaiting its performance. This was exactly such an offer as I wanted, and you may be sure I will avail myself of it. It is doubly advantageous as the English Opera House continues open until next winter, but I must see it first. You see our prospects go on slowly, but every day I feel the ground more firm beneath my feet. Banim offers me many introductions. He is acquainted with Thomas Moore—who was to see him the other day—Campbell and others of celebrity. The less I think that is said about my theatrical views at present the better. O Lord! if I should be damned after all this! But no! that will not be the case I am sure, for I have a presentiment of success. What would I have done if I had not found Banim? I should have instantly despaired on ——'s treatment of me. I should never be tired of talking about and thinking of Banim. Mark me, he is a man. The only one I have met since I have left Ireland, almost."

Again, on March 31st:—

"My dearest Ellen.—It is now a long time since I have written to, or heard directly from Pallas. William mentioned in his last that you were very ill, but I hope you do not add to your already severe sufferings those of imag-

ination: indeed I know you do not. Oh! my dear Ellen, if I could but transfer to you and William a little of the hope—the bright expectancy that cheers and buoys up my own spirit through the anxiety of suspense, I think it would be well both for your health and happiness. I am not impatient, though anxious. *I should myself have wondered if I had struck at once into reputation and independence.* ——*'s rejection of me, I regard as a dispensation of Providence.* I was a *leetle* too confident perhaps, and it was a seasonable humiliation in the commencement of my career. However this does not excuse him. I do not say he might not have rejected me, but his manner of doing so was bad. He knew I was a stranger in London, young and inexperienced in such matters, and his countryman, and he kept me in suspense three months; then sent back my piece without comment, wrapped in an old paper, and unsealed! If I had any wish for a little revenge—but I had not—I understand it will soon be gratified in some measure. The affair, without mentioning names, will be taken up in one of Blackwood's forthcoming magazines—not much to his advantage. I have no enmity to the man, but for justice' sake, I don't grudge him whatever he gets from Blackwood for it."

There could be nothing more painfully interesting to a student of human nature than the fitful turns and changes in this poor adventurer. Under these many rallies an affected buoyancy can be found, with the sinking of despair; and the passage in italics offers an exquisite stroke of character. Two months more, and such attempts at veiling the hideous truth from himself were abandoned. In May he wrote:—

"For myself, I am quite tired of this, if I may use a *cockney* idiom, *hot water* kind of life; or our own more rich and expressive mode of conveying the idea, 'pulling the devil by the tail.' It would be a great thing for me, if I

could secure a present livelihood, while I prosecuted other views at the same time, for I cannot do anything with confidence or ease, while I have the terrible idea starting on my mind at intervals that it *may* possibly be that I am misspending time; but this at least I hope is not the case. At all events there are many things I could then do, which I can scarcely do now with comfort; among the rest, writing for magazines, which I have been strongly recommended to try, and which one gentleman whom I know, told me he used to make £300 a year by, and yet without permanently engaging himself with any. Of the great theatres I know I cannot form any immediate expectation. And the summer one is not open yet.

"I will tell you now some things which will give you some idea of the drama, and the dramatic management of the day, which however for the credit of the *métier*, I would not breathe to 'ears profane.' Of all the walks in literature, it certainly is at present the most heart-rending, the most toilsome, and the most harassing to a man who is possessed of a mind that may be at all wrought on by circumstances. The managers only seek to fill their houses, and don't care a curse for all the dramatists that ever lived. . . . Literary men see the trouble which attends it, the bending and cringing to performers, the chicanery of managers, and the anxiety of suspense, which no previous success can relieve them from—and therefore it is that they seek to make a talent for some other walk, and content themselves with the quiet fame of a 'closet writer,' which is accompanied with little or none of the uneasiness of mind which the former brings with it. . . . For us, poor devils—who love the drama well, and are not so confident in other branches of that most toilsome and thankless of all professions, authorship—we must only be content to wade through thick and thin, and make our goal as soon as we

may. This saw-dust and water work will pass away like everything else, and then perchance the poor half-drowned muse of the buskin may be permitted to lift her head above the flood once more. I don't know how it is, though I have never put a line in print since I came here—at least so that I was known in it by anybody—I have got a sneaking kind of reputation as a poet among my acquaintances.

"With regard to comedy, the surest ground for a comic writer to go on, is to select present manners, follies, and fashions for his target. These *hits* always *tell* well in the performance, and carry off many a heavy plot. Croly has practiced this with success in his piece. Shall I tell you a secret? *The most successful dramatist of our day, I mean as to the number of successful pieces he produced, wrote six plays before he could get one accepted.*"

Later he wrote to his sister:—

"Do you know I cannot help thinking sometimes, that we should all have been better and happier if we had accompanied the first emigrants of our family and settled with them in Susquehana. For my part, situated as I am at present, uncertain of the ground I stand on, and sickened by repeated delays and disappointments, there is only one thing that makes me imagine I should not be more at ease there, and that is that I know I never could be so anywhere, until I had tried London; and even yet, nothing but the consideration of being amongst my friends would induce me to make the exchange: I mean to say being amongst them, and seeing them in health and comfort. I look on success now as a matter of mere business and nothing more. As to fame, if I could accomplish it in any way, I should scarcely try for its sake alone. I believe it is the case with almost everybody before they succeed, to wear away all relish for it in the exertion. I

have seen enough of literature and literary men to know what it is, and I feel convinced, that at the best, and with the highest reputation, a man might make himself as happy in other walks of life. I see those who have got it as indifferent about it as if totally unknown, while at the same time they like to add to it. But money! money is the grand object—the all in all. I am not avaricious, but I see that they are the happiest who are making the most, and am so convinced of the reality of its blessings, that if I could make a fortune by *splitting matches*, I think I never would put a word in print."

Again:—

"My employment, I mean that which procured me immediate remuneration, has for the present ceased. I have something yet on hands, but though the bookseller who suggested the idea to me promised to engage in it, he would not speak of terms until it is completed. This will not be before six or seven weeks, and though certain of disposing of it after that time, mere *hope* will not lend me her wings to fly over the interval. You may judge what a mercenary scribbler I am, and how unwilling to let a job slip through my fingers, when I tell you that I engaged to translate, and actually translated a volume and a half of one of Prevot's works, for two guineas! My dear Dan, tell this not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askalon."

His next bitter revelation, though gayly made, is significant.

"Under such circumstances as these, it is rather vexatious that I cannot avail myself of my own exertions through such a mortifying and apparently trivial obstacle as the state of my *garde-robe*. Banim has been with me twice within the last fortnight; first to tell me that Dr. Maginn, who is the principal writer in Blackwood, had very kindly

offered, without any personal knowledge of me, to introduce me to the 'editor of the Literary Gazette' (his intimate friend), and the second time to ask me to dine at his house with some literary gentlemen, amongst whom was Dr. Maginn. Both invitations I was obliged to decline (on the score of being closely occupied), and the next morning Banim called again at my lodgings, and not finding me at home, left a note to say that he was sorry I did not come, but whenever I chose he would feel great pleasure in introducing me to those gentlemen, who were anxious for my acquaintance. With the assistance of heaven, I hope I shall after some time be enabled to get over this difficulty." Again he says: "It will be necessary for me now in order to procure more drudgery to go out among the publishers: this I cannot do, because of the prevention I have mentioned. The fact is, I am at present almost a complete prisoner; I wait until dusk every evening, to creep from my mouse-hole, and snatch a little fresh air on the bridge close by. Good heaven! to think that I am here in the centre of mountains of wealth; almost 'upon 'Change,' and to have no opportunity of laying an *honest* hand upon a stray draft in its flight from one commercial fellow to another, who has no more business with it than I have with—anything that I have too much of already and don't know what to do with—say common sense and modesty."

"You have no idea what a heart-breaking life that of a young scribbler beating about, and endeavoring to make his way in London is; going into a bookseller's shop, as I have often done, and being obliged to praise up my own manuscript, to induce him to look at it at all—for there is so much competition, that a person without a name will not even get a trial—while he puts on his spectacles, and answers all your self-commendation with a 'hum—

um;'—a set of hardened villains! and yet at no time whatever could I have been prevailed upon to quit London altogether. That horrid word failure,—No!—death first! There is a great tragic actress here who offered to present my play, and do all in her power to have it acted, but I have been sickened of such matters for a little while. I may however set about it some other time. Why I have yesterday written a play (in one act) which is to be published this week with a most laughable illustration by the Hogarth of the day, George Cruikshank. There's dramatic fame for you! In blank verse too, mind I don't say poetry! I have a conscience as well as another man."

Friends, even his dearest one Banim, noticed that he shunned their company, and grew morbidly sensitive and reserved. One went in search of him, and after much difficulty discovered him in a poor district, in a squalid lodging, the landlady of which expressed her fears that he was in want of the necessaries of life, and was besides battling against illness. An offer of assistance was made, which was rejected haughtily, and resentfully, by the poor struggler. Precisely at this moment, when the strain had became unendurable, these gallant efforts found some reward: and this darkest hour proved to be the last before the dawn, or some good promise of the dawn. Then, and then only, did the unselfish creature open his heart to those at home, and ask sympathy for what he had gone through.

Nearly two years of this terrible struggle had gone by, and he thus at last confided to his parents all he had suffered:—

"My dear, ever dear Father and Mother,—Under the circumstances as they appear to you, it is matter more of pain than astonishment to me, that you should have been so entirely at a loss in finding excusable motives for my silence. It is one of those misfortunes (and I hope the

last of them) which the miserable and galling life I have led since I came to London (until very lately) has thrown on my shoulders, and which of course I must endure as well as I can. But if you knew, my dear Mother, what that life has been, it would I believe have led you to a less injurious conclusion to me. Until within a short time back I have not had since I left Ireland a single moment's peace of mind—constantly—constantly running backward and forward and trying a thousand expedients, and only to meet disappointments everywhere I turned. It may perhaps appear strange and unaccountable to you, but I could not sit down to tell you only that I was in despair of ever being able to do anything in London, as was the fact for a long time. I never will think or talk upon the subject again. It was a year such as I did not think it possible I could have outlived, and the very recollection of it puts me into the horrors. Let me first, however, beg you to be satisfied that this it was, and no neglect—I was not guilty of it for an instant—that prevented my writing; beside that when I do write I must fill up a large sheet, or send none. When first I came to London, my own self-conceit, backed by the opinion of one of the most original geniuses of the age, induced me to set about revolutionizing the dramatic taste of the time by writing for the stage. Indeed the design was formed, and the first step taken (a couple of pieces written) in Ireland. I cannot with my present experience conceive anything more comical than my own views and measures at the time. A young gentleman totally unknown, even to a single family in London, coming into town with a few pounds in one pocket, and a brace of tragedies in the other, supposing that the one will set him up before the others are exhausted, is not a very novel, but a very laughable delusion. 'Twould weary you, or I would carry you through a number of curious scenes

into which it led me. Only imagine the modest young Munsterman spouting his tragedy to a room full of literary ladies and gentlemen; some of high consideration too. The applause however of that circle on that night was sweeter, far sweeter to me, than would be the bravos of a whole theatre at present, being united at the time to the confident anticipation of it. One of the people present immediately got me an introduction to —— (I was offered several for all the actors). To —— I went—and he let down the pegs that made my music. He was very polite—talked and chatted about himself and Shiel and my friend —excellent friend Banim. He kept my play four months, wrote me some nonsensical apologies about keeping it so long, and *cut* off to Ireland, leaving orders to have it sent to my lodgings, without any opinion. I was quite surprised at this, and the more so, as Banim, who is one of the most successful dramatic writers, told me he was sure he would keep it: at the same time saying, what indeed I found every person who had the least theatrical knowledge join in, that I acted most unwisely in putting a play into an actor's hands. But enough of theatricals? Well, this disappointment sent me into the contrary extreme. I before imagined I could do anything; I now thought I could do nothing. One supposition was just as foolish as the other. It was then I set about writing for those weekly publications; all of which, except the 'Literary Gazette,' cheated me abominably. Then finding this to be the case, I wrote for the great magazines. My articles were generally inserted; but on calling for payment—seeing that I was a poor inexperienced devil, there was so much shuffling and shabby work that it disgusted me, and I gave up the idea of making money that way. I now lost heart for everything; got into the cheapest lodgings I could make out, and there worked on, rather to divert my mind from

the horrible gloom that I felt growing on me in spite of myself, than with any hope of being remunerated. This, and the recollection of the expense I had put William to, and the fears—that every moment became conviction—that I should never be enabled to fulfill his hopes or my own expectations, all came pressing together upon my mind and made me miserable. A thousand, and a thousand times I wished that I could lie down quietly and die at once, and be forgotten forever. But that however was not to be had for the asking. I don't think I left anything undone that could have changed the course of affairs, or brought me a little portion of the good luck that was going on about me; but good luck was too busy elsewhere. I can hardly describe to you the state of mind I was in at this time. It was not an indolent despondency, for I was working hard, and I am now—and it is only now—receiving money for the labor of those dreadful hours. I used not to see a face that I knew, and after sitting writing all day, when I walked in the streets in the evening it actually seemed to me as if I was of a different species altogether from the people about me. The fact was, from pure anxiety alone I was more than half dead, and would most certainly have given up the ghost I believe, were it not that by the merest accident on earth, the literary friend who had procured me the unfortunate introduction a year before dropped in one evening to 'have a talk' with me. I had not seen him, nor anybody else that I knew, for some months, and he frightened me by saying I looked like a ghost. In a few days however a publisher of his acquaintance had got some things to do—works to arrange, regulate, and revise; so he asked me if I would devote a few hours in the middle of every day to the purpose for £50 a year. I did so, and among other things which I got to revise was a weekly fashionable journal. After I

had read this for some weeks, I said to myself, 'Why hang it, I am sure I can write better than this at any rate.' And at the same time I knew that the contributors were well paid. I wrote some sketches of London life, and sent them anonymously to the editor, offering to contribute without payment. . . . I have the satisfaction to see my articles quoted and commended in the daily papers; satisfaction, I say, as everything of that kind gives me a firmer hold of the paper. The theatrical department is left altogether to me; and I mortify my revengeful spirit by invariably giving —— (the actor) all the applause he could expect, or in justice lay claim to. I assure you I feel a philosophical pride and comfort in thus proving to myself that my conduct is not to be influenced by that of another, no matter how nearly the latter may affect my interests. Thus, things begin to look in smiles upon me at last. I have within the past fortnight cleared away the last of the debts I had incurred here with the good fortune of meeting them in full time to prevent even a murmur. With the assistance of heaven, I hope my actual embarrassments ('tis laughable to apply the words to such little matters as they are) have passed away forever.—Your affectionate son, GERALD GRIFFIN."

Had passed away forever! It happily proved that he spoke with certainty. With this the tide began to turn in the most remarkable way; he discovered a vein for story-telling, and the charming "Collegians"—a tale written with much of the grace of his countryman Goldsmith—was presently to make his name known, and raise him above want. Then followed success and reputation.

Mr. Forster, with the sympathy of a man of genius, has admirably touched the true significance of this story—which has been too long overlooked:—

"Gerald Griffin's life was one of those strange, silent

romances which pass quite unheeded amid the roar and movement of the busier life around them; yet the reader will find a brief mention of it not at all inappropriate to my present subject. He was a Limerick man, and at the age of twenty, eager to make a great dash upon the stage, he came up to London without a friend, but with one tragedy finished in his pocket, and another rapidly forming in his brain. The desperate craving of his youth was to force his way into the London theatres, and he seems to have determined very resolutely to use the faculty of which he felt himself possessed to that end, failure or neglect to the contrary notwithstanding—*Aguire*, his first tragedy, making no way towards a hearing, he wrote a second. This was *Gisippus*, and written as it was in his twentieth year, I do not hesitate to call it one of the marvels of youthful production in literature. The solid grasp of character, the manly depth of thought, the beauties as well as defects of the composition (more than I can here enumerate), wanted only right direction to have given to our English drama another splendid and enduring name. In little London coffee-houses, on little strips of paper, the tragedy was written. But he could get no hearing for it. Still undaunted, he wrote a comedy, he wrote farces—he tried the stage at every avenue, and it would have none of him. Meanwhile, he had been starving for two miserable years; waiting all day within-doors, and never venturing out till darkness threw its friendly veil over his threadbare coat; to use the common phrase, *denying himself* (because he could not get them) the common necessaries of life; fasting 'three days together without tasting food,' in a small room in an obscure court near St. Paul's; living for the most part, in short, on such munificent booksellers' rewards as two guineas for the translation of a volume and a half of a French novel. Something better presented itself at last,

however, and emerging from his misery, he became a critic, a reporter, and, stimulated by Banim's success, a writer of Irish tales. His dramatic dream was dreamt, and he never returned to the stage again. But not without ill effects to himself could he hope to keep thus dormant and unused the faculty which, as it seems to me, he had received in greatest abundance. More even than the zeal of God's House, in his later years this *eat him up*."

He had bade adieu forever to what had at first tempted him to London—the delicious *ignis fatuus* of the stage, which had led him on through so many miseries. His poetical plays were flung aside and never thought of again. —Suddenly, in the midst of his success, not under the pressure of any wretchedness, the thought occurred to him that there was something more worthy of his energies, and of the purpose of a life, than the writing popular stories for bread; and, without ostentation or parade of piety, he quietly withdrew himself from the world and retired to a monastery, where he lived a happy life, then fell into a sudden fever, and died holily. Before entering the monastery he had burnt his first play "Aguire"—but had stayed his hand when he came to "Gisippus," "perhaps," as Mr. Forster says, "in touching memory of his early hopes, and that some record might be left in vindication of them." Two years after his death came the ironical *amende* of fortune: not however too late; for the author, had he been alive, would probably have been indifferent. The piece was taken from the dusty shelf or forgotten drawer, brought out at Drury Lane, adorned with the splendid acting of Macready and Miss Faucit, and received triumphantly. The Press exhausted itself in praises. As the curtain fell the audience rose to their feet, and the theatre rang with acclamations. It was felt that a work full of grace and beauty had been presented. The great actress, and the

greater actor, who had interpreted the chief characters, were summoned again and again. Nor was this the conventional tribute, that has since become hackneyed. The piece grew in popularity, and was acted many times. Yet it was owned that, mixed with the triumph there was a sort of painful feeling—an indistinct sense that the recognition had been delayed too long—until the now-acclaimed author was in his grave. Few, however, knew the story of the struggle, the agonies of hope and suffering, connected with the piece they witnessed. Fewer still knew that the author had closed his weary life, a poor simple monk, and was now at rest by the waters of the River Lee.

There is no such affecting chapter in the whole pathetic chronicle of the Stage.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE YOUNG ROSCIUS.

### 1791.

WERE it announced, during the present year, that there was still living a person who had been the talk of the whole kingdom, and a popular idol, fully seventy years ago, such a statement might fairly be received with wonder or incredulity. Such a phenomenon involves a union of longevity and of distinction not likely to be found in the same person. Yet Mr. or "Master" Betty, once the "Young Roscius," who died in the month of August in the present year, was transporting vast audiences with delight, was sought and run after, in the year 1803, and may be thus considered the single celebrity of that era who has survived

to our day. Further, he stands at the head of the line of "infant prodigies," if, indeed, he may not be distinguished from that uninteresting class. It seems to be understood that there was something singularly attractive, and that touched the heart, in the performance of "this beautiful and intelligent boy," as he was called—a something that enabled him to surmount the awkward incongruities of his theatrical position, such as the spectacle of a child acting with grown-up people. It was a very original and striking performance, distinguished from the feeble and unpleasant efforts of other infant performers. Much that is interesting and even romantic belongs therefore to the story of "young Master Betty," who so lately departed as the very old Mr. Betty.

Dr. Betty, an Irish doctor from the north of Ireland, had married an English lady named Stanton, who was of genteel family. Later, this point was much insisted on, and all connection with the stage disclaimed, for certain malicious persons insinuated that Stanton was a name well known in the profession; as indeed readers of Boswell will recollect, a Lichfield manager of that name having waited on Dr. Johnson to ask him to command a play. She, it seems, brought to her husband the handsome but oddly-named "manor of Hopton Wafers," while he himself possessed a competence. They were staying at Shrewsbury when the prodigy "Master Henry Betty" was born, an event which took place on Sept. 13th, 1791, and was duly registered at St. Chad's Church. When he was five years old, the whole family returned to the north of Ireland, where Mr. Betty embarked in what was grandly described as "business relating to the linen manufacture near Ballynahinch," combining with it a little farming. Here the boy was duly educated, his genteel mother paying particular attention to his pronunciation and accent, "as they were

living in a district where the English tongue was spoken in its worst depravity." One day the child heard his father declaim Wolsey's speech, and on asking what was the meaning of the gestures, was told they were what is usually styled acting. "What great events," says the deeply-impressed chronicler of Master Betty's career, "spring from events apparently trivial! From this moment, it seems, his destiny was determined!" The boy began to learn speeches out of plays, which he used to recite on the sideboard for friends. The passion grew in him, until some of the genteel relations in England heard of his taste, and interposing, required that it should be summarily checked.

It came to pass, however, that in the year 1802 the great Siddons was playing in Belfast, and Master Betty was taken to see her in Elvira. He was enchanted. "When he returned home, he told his father with a look of such enthusiasm, and a voice so pathetic that those who heard nim will never forget the expression, that he should certainly die if he was not to be a player." He could think of nothing but the divine Elvira; he learned her speeches, and became so possessed with theatrical ideas that his father took him to the Belfast manager, Atkins, and made him recite before him. Mr. Hough, the prompter, a man of more practical mind, was next called in to give his advice—was invited on a visit to the Bettys' house, where he gave the boy instruction. It is quite evident therefore that the genteel Bettys, from the beginning, were not disinclined to turn their child's talents to profit, though they affected to give out that they were driven to allow what they disapproved. As at this time the rebellion was going on, all the theatres were shut; but when matters were more composed, an arrangement was made with Atkins—"a man of friendly disposition and character"—for the boy's appearance at his theatre. The first appearance of

the prodigy was announced for August 16th, 1803, in execrable grammar that sufficiently corresponded with "the worst depravity of pronunciation" that obtained in the district. "Mr. Atkins presents his respects to the ladies and gentlemen of Belfast, *and the public*, that, willing to bring forward every novelty in his power, he has, through the intercession of several ladies, prevailed on the friends of a young gentleman only eleven years old, whose theatrical abilities have been the wonder and admiration of all who have heard him, *to* perform in public two or three of the characters he most excels in." "Zara" was the piece selected, from the pen of "that ingenious author Voltaire." Martial law was still in force, and the theatre had to be closed by nine o'clock; but to oblige the manager, "the drums had been ordered to beat an hour later than usual." Every one in Belfast, of course, knew it was "little Betty" that was coming forward, and the curiosity was extraordinary. The success was stupendous, and the applause tumultuous. The boy (whose age was truthfully announced, though, according to professional usage, he might fairly have been introduced as being only eight years old) played with extraordinary feeling and composure. Next day the whole town was talking of the performance. The hardheaded flax-spinners of the town were skeptical, but went to judge for themselves. His fame spread to Dublin, and Jones, the well-known manager, to whom Mr. Croker addressed his "Familiar Epistles," at once made an engagement with him. On November 28th, "Douglas" was announced, the part of Norval "by a young gentleman only twelve years of age, whose admirable talents have procured him the deserved appellation of the Infant Roscius." The public was then respectfully informed that the authorities had suspended the orders for persons being within their houses by an

early hour, and that, "no person coming from the theatre would be stopped until after eleven o'clock." The terms appear to have been that he was to share the house, as he had done at Belfast; and in Dublin the house held £400. His reception was of the most tumultuous kind. The Dublin audiences are as impressionable as an Italian one. The town was enraptured, though some persons of more correct taste deprecated the spectacle as unworthy of the stage; but such cavilers were overwhelmed with obloquy. He gave a round of characters, and the part of Hamlet "he learned in three mornings." Mr. Jones was eager to make arrangements for "farming" the prodigy during a number of years; but the prudent father, with Mr. Hough the prompter, who had been taken as instructor, and what is now called "advance agent," declined this proposal. He next appeared at Cork, where the nightly receipts of a wretched amphitheatre rose from ten pounds to one hundred pounds. At Glasgow he had the same success, and a person who attacked him in the papers, being discovered, was compelled to leave the city. He was received, says the manager Jackson, "with the greatest bursts of applause I ever remember to have been given by an audience. Nothing that words can express can come up to the full extent of his surprising endowments, which so strongly predominate through his infant frame." This enthusiasm seems but a type of the sort of delirium into which the kingdom was to be thrown. He declared that the boy "had been presented by Heaven," and dwelt on the "perfect and refined spirit which had been incorporated with his form previous to his birth." But at Edinburgh his reception was even more rapturous, and Lord Meadowbank addressed to him what was styled "an elegant admonitory and interesting letter," sending to him "the little work that I recommended yesterday to

your perusal," and which was "by much the most valuable production of the most eminent person of your name, and on that account might merit your attention. I am convinced your mind will burn within you as you read." This was, in short, a copy of the "Minstrel," and it is amusing to see how either local pronunciation or national pride had lengthened "Betty" into "Beattie." He further entreated him "to form a resolution" to study the ancients—Homer, Euripides, &c. This is a good specimen of the pedantic tone of the overpraised "literary society" of Edinburgh. The last six nights here, his agent says, produced nearly £850.

He was now to appear in England, and Macready, one of the eccentric country managers, and father of the late tragedian, secured him for the Birmingham theatre. This odd being, who seems to have had some of Mr. Crummles's singularities, had employed Jackson to arrange the engagement, and was delighted at having secured the prodigy cheaply at ten pounds a night. But when the party arrived, and he saw the boy, he became eager to be let off. They, on their part, were willing to release him on payment of traveling expenses; on which, perhaps mystified by such readiness, he made a cunning proposal that sixty pounds should be deducted for the expenses of each night: after which the "house should be shared." This seemed a safe arrangement, as he probably calculated that the attraction would scarcely draw the sixty pounds. But the result turned out fortunately for Master Betty, who received fifty pounds a night instead of ten.

An "old actress," whose mother was engaged at the theatre, recently communicated some recollections of this season to a daily paper. She remembered particularly the first presentation of the boy to the Birmingham company:

"On the morning appointed for Master Betty's first re-

hearsal, there was a great assembly in the green-room, and everybody evinced the utmost anxiety and curiosity to see him. He came, attended by Mr. Hough. To my childish sight he was a complete vision of beauty in the broad daylight, without the night's appliances. 'What is he like?' inquired Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs. Bartley, who succeeded Mrs. Siddons on her retirement. 'Just such a boy as you would imagine,' returned the manager; 'fair, bright-eyed, intelligent, and handsome.' Betty bowed in an elegant manner as Mr. Macready presented him and his tutor to the company. The latter kept aloof. The boy went round the room, and shook hands with all in a winning, easy manner, yet was totally devoid of either bashfulness or boldness. 'My Lord Randolph, my father, Mr. Holmes, old Norval, Glenalvon' (a very low bow). 'Allow me,' said Mrs. Glover or Mrs. Lichfield, 'as your mother, Lady Randolph, to give you a kiss,' and I quite trembled with delight as I leaned on my mother's knee, when he shook hands with her as the gentle Anna. Mr. Hough was the constant guide and companion of the Young Roscius. He was, doubtless, a clever man, and had an excellent method of instruction. My mother saw one of his marked books, with lines for the proper inflection of the voice, and instructions as to action: 'Here raise your voice—lower your voice here—put the right leg forward here—withdraw it here!'

"Master Betty made his first appearance in Birmingham, in the character of young Norval. His looks upon his entrance fascinated and riveted the attention of the audience. His youthful figure was graceful in the extreme, and the picturesque Highland costume displayed it to the utmost advantage. His features were delicate, but somewhat feminine; his eyes were a full, bright, and shining blue; his fair hair was long, and hung in ringlets over his shoulders;

in the daytime those abundant tresses were confined with a comb, which still more gave the idea of a female in male costume. His first speech was heard amidst the hushed silence of the audience. It commences with 'a low-born man,' and finishes with the expression of a desire to be a soldier and 'gain a name in arms.' There was a pause, and as Lord Randolph commenced his reply he was interrupted by a tremendous burst of applause. Betty played four nights during the first week of his engagement; but on each occasion the theatre was only moderately attended. Mr. Macready began to entertain uneasy doubts as to the profit to be derived from the performances, and the actors decided that the Young Roscius was totally unattractive. His fame and reputation were, however, steadily advancing, and each succeeding night of his engagement the theatre was crowded with eager and enthusiastic spectators. The 'sensation' was potent; it had affected all sorts and conditions of people, and the rage to witness the wonderful child became universal among the inhabitants of Birmingham."

The *furore* was indeed prodigious. The hotels were crammed to overflowing: and the stage-coaches from all the district round arrived filled with persons eager to secure places at the theatre. If he excited this enthusiasm, he was also to provoke controversy, with opposition and even riot. Vehement pamphlets were issued in his praise, the most curious of which was one by Bisset, a local scribe.

The son of the country manager and the handsome boy-actor became great friends and playfellows. They used to contrive practical jokes, one of which they carried out at the house of an "influential gentleman of Birmingham," who had invited them to dine, by removing the cushions of a sofa, but leaving the cover, so that a stout old gentleman and lady, who sat down, fell through to the ground.

The sketch of the old manager recalls the figure of Miss O'Neill's father, who was of the same type.

"My mother," says the "old actress," "acted Floranthe, the lady-love of Octavian, in 'The Mountaineers.' On Floranthe making her appearance, she was startled and confused by a rapturous burst of applause, which lasted so long that she almost felt herself a subject of ridicule; and what added to her confusion was 'Misther' Macready calling out in a broad Irish accent, 'Bow, bow! death and confusion, why don't you bow!' His Milesian instincts were most furious when he was excited. Now my mother, who was, as I have said, very pretty, and was then in her twenty-fifth year, looked exceedingly well in male attire, yet was not vain enough to believe that her appearance was so beautiful as to excite the audience to such a rapturous expression of their admiration; consequently she did not bow, because the idea immediately occurred to her that she was mistaken for the young Roscius, which was indeed the case. The effect of this *contretemps* was that Floranthe's first scene resulted in a dead silence, and that when the boy really appeared as Octavian he was but coldly received."

The boy, who was naturally made a pet of, seems to have been engaging enough, and once wept because the manager would not allow him to act for the benefit of one of the actresses. Many stories were also told of his charity.

In this tide of success there arrived a gentleman from Drury Lane, Mr. Justice Graham, who came to pass judgment on the talents of the prodigy, and made the surprisingly meagre offer of "half a clear benefit" for seven nights' acting. This was at once declined, Manager Macready pronouncing that fifty guineas a night was the lowest that ought to be accepted. The managers of Covent Garden—Harris and Kemble—heard of the failure of this

attempt, and instantly dispatched a Captain Barlow to Birmingham, with *carte blanche* for terms. A rather odd engagement was then made: the boy was to appear for three nights in the last week of November, three in the first week of December, three in the last week of January, and three in the first week of February. Repenting of their slackness, the Drury Lane management then dispatched an emissary with fresh offers; and, through an oversight in the Covent Garden agreement, were able to secure him for the intervening nights, for which he was not bound to the rival house. With a wish also to secure his first appearance at their house, they made him handsome offers to cancel all his provincial engagements. This he honorably refused to do; though it must be said that the event proved that he had taken the wisest as well as the most honorable course. For all during this progress he was receiving over one hundred pounds a night, and at the same time the enthusiasm was whetting London expectancy. Bruises and torn clothes attended the operation of securing places; whilst at Manchester the confusion was so tremendous, that all applications for boxes were required to be made by letter, and, after being placed in a bag, were solemnly drawn by lot, in presence of two respectable gentlemen of the town. We learn, also, that Master Betty "enjoyed the particular notice of the Duke of Gloucester," who was commanding in that part of the country, and who was graciously pleased to express a rather barren wish that the prodigy, or "Infant Roscius," should receive a sound education. His father now received a flattering letter from the great John of Covent Garden, who, for all his devotion to what was classical, was not indifferent to what was likely to "take." He spoke of "the happiness he should soon enjoy in welcoming them to Covent Garden, and heartily congratulated the stage on

the ornament and support it was to receive from Master Betty's extraordinary talents and exertions." It was hardly fair of "glorious John" to affect later to be disgusted with the raptures of the London audiences at performances which he himself had thus encouraged. At the Doncaster races, there were to be seen carriages starting for Sheffield, labeled "Theatrical Coaches, to carry six inside to see the Young Roscius;" while silver cups were presented by grateful managers.

Nothing could exceed the expectancy with which he was waited in London. Saturday, December 1, 1804, was the day chosen for his appearance. By ten o'clock in the morning a crowd of persons was parading Bow Street and the colonnades of Covent Garden; and towards one o'clock there was a line of people at the doors of the theatre. Before evening the line was stretching in long impenetrable columns beyond Bow Street into Drury Lane. As the hour for opening drew near, the air was filled with shrieks; there was crushing and fainting. Then the crowd was admitted, and the house was filled in a few moments. Notwithstanding, there was a pressure forwards, from masses still struggling to make their way in; until a force of soldiers drew up before the doors, and saved the crowd within from being overwhelmed. As Cowper sang:

> "The theatre, too small, did suffocate
> Its squeezed contents, and more than it admitted
> Did sigh at their exclusion, and return
> Ungratified; for BETTY there, the *Boy*,
> Did strut and storm and straddle, stamp and stare,
> And show the world how Garrick did not act."

The pit was nearly two-thirds filled by gentlemen who paid box-price, rushed in, and leaped over the balconies; when it was filled these unplaced intruders lawlessly fixed themselves in the seats of others who had secured them weeks be-

fore, and there defied the owners and their remonstrances. Box-keepers and the police were called, but, grown desperate, the intruders held their ground by main force, and with indescribable effrontery compounded for their usurpation by allowing a few ladies into the front seats. The pit was like a surging sea, and more than twenty persons, overcome by the heat and crush, had to be dragged up into the boxes, as into a boat, to be thence transported into the lobbies. As some relief, the curtain was raised about a foot, and thus allowed a current of air to blow over the pit. It was stated that some charitable ladies in the boxes passed the whole evening in fanning some exhausted gentlemen-friends in the pit. Loud shrieks would occasionally rise from the same place, and hands were seen to be lifted up, as if imploring aid and relief. At last some order was restored, and Charles Kemble came out to speak an apropos prologue, but was not listened to. He at once withdrew, and the play began. The actors were then ordered off, and the prologue called for, which was delivered in a Babel of noises. The first act of the play—which was the ranting, raging "Barbarossa"—was got through with the same confusion, the prodigy not having to appear in it. Then came the expected moment; and Mr. Boaden, who was present, thus describes the scene:—

"At length, dressed as a slave, in white-linen pantaloons, a short, close, russet jacket, trimmed with sable, and a turban hat or cap, at the command of the tyrant, on came the desire of all eyes,—Master William Henry West Betty. With the sagacity of an old stager, I walked quietly into the house at the end of the first act, made my way into the lobby of the first circle, planted myself at the back of one of the boxes, outside, and saw him make his bow, and never stirred till the curtain fell at the end of the play. I had a good glass, and saw him perfectly. He was a fair,

pleasing youth, well formed, and remarkably graceful. The first thing that struck me was, that it was passion for the profession that made him an actor; he was doing what he loved to do, and put his whole force into it. The next thing that I felt was, that he had amazing docility, and great aptitude at catching what he was taught—he could convey passions which he had never felt, nor seen in operation, but upon the stage. Grace, energy, fire, vehemence, were his own—the understanding was of a maturer brain. He seemed, however, to think all he said; and had he been taught to pronounce with accuracy, there was nothing beyond requisite for the profession."

The night was one of rapturous triumph. All his exertions were greeted with "huzzas"—a different mode of salutation from the modern cheers. The Prince of Wales, "who sat in Lady Mulgrave's box," led the applause; behind the scenes was a crowd of distinguished persons—ladies of the highest rank, who had been privileged by Mr. Brandon, the popular box-keeper; with the Lord Chief Baron, Lord Melville, and others. Mr. Colman was also present, and observed to be enthusiastic. Kemble's demeanor was characteristically reserved. "His eyes were riveted on him: that great connoisseur did not withhold his due meed of praise."

In short, a sort of delirium had now set in, and the impression produced was perhaps the most remarkable ever known on the English stage. Mrs. Mathews heard "a great man declare his belief that the boy was supernaturally gifted, and expected to see the roof of the theatre open some night and his spirit ascend!" Duchesses and other ladies of title were seen clustered round him, and their carriages were placed at his service to take him to the theatre. The King and Queen sent for him, and he was welcomed at Carlton House. When he fell sick, the street

was blocked up with the carriages of fair inquirers. Bulletins were regularly issued. Northcote painted him, in one of the most ludicrously sentimental pictures that can be conceived—a languishing boy taking fire from Shakespeare's altar. The old artist told Hazlitt, with much truth, that the attraction was "his beautiful effusion of natural sensibility, which, with the graceful play of limb in youth, gave such an advantage over every one about him." "Gentleman Smith"—the Turveydrop of the stage—came up from his country place, and, with great solemnity, presented him with a ring of Garrick's, which the great actor had pledged him to give to that rare performer who acted from nature and the heart. Elliston's opinion we would be eager to know, both for the substance as well as for the form in which it was certain to be delivered. It was piquant and original, as might be expected: "Sir," he said, "my opinion of that young gentleman's talents will never transpire during my life. I have written my convictions down; they have been attested by competent witnesses, and sealed and deposited in the iron safe, at my banker's, to be drawn forth and opened, with other important documents, at my death. The world will then know what Mr. Elliston thought of Master Betty." Strangest of all was a compliment from the University of Cambridge, who selected him as the subject of a prize ode.

It is amusing to see with what silent indignation the legitimate actors looked on at the success of the pigmy rival. Kemble and his greater sister were scornful and facetious. She pronounced that there was nothing in him; he was merely "a pretty child." With all their great classic *répertoire*, they now had to stand aside, while the town indulged its humor. Cooke grumbled loudly at being obliged to act with him, while the attractive Inchbald declared he was merely a clever little boy, and had she never

seen boys act, would have thought him exquisite. The whole attitude, indeed, of the actors suggests one of Mr. Dickens's inimitable touches, in his account of the ruefulness with which Mr. Folair set himself to his duty of co-operating with the Phenomenon. Mrs. Jordan's was the most characteristic protest; she came into the green-room with her ringing laugh, deploring the memory of Herod. "A silly lordling," says Mrs. Mathews, "had the impertinent folly to ask John Kemble whether he did not consider Master Betty the finest actor upon the stage." To which delicate question "glorious John," taking a pinch of snuff between his fingers and raising it slowly to his nose, with great *sang-froid* replied: "I have never, my Lord, seen the young gentleman play." Yet, as we have seen, he had addressed complimentary speeches to the prodigy, and congratulated the stage on the acquisition of such talent. Emery, Charles Kemble, Mrs. Powell, Elliston, and other actors of repute, had all to follow in the boy's train.

There can be no doubt it was a very unique and interesting entertainment, and in its way one of high merit. The proof of this is the impression left on persons of superior judgment. Charles Fox, during the excitement of the performance, went so far as to declare that he thought it as fine as Garrick's. The sober judgment of Boaden, a critic of experience, we have seen. In size, he was taller than boys of his years, and something was added to his height by artificial means; while Mrs. Lichfield, who played with him at one house, was purposely selected as being of short stature. His most successful characters were young Norval, and Selim in "Barbarossa," both of whom were youths; so it really amounted to the character of a youth being presented with singular grace, intelligence, and talent by a youth—a very rare spectacle in-

deed. Some thought that the charm lay in his restoration of the old musical chanting that belonged to the days of Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Cibber. Much, too, was to be set down to his personal attractions—a soft, interesting face, a small, expressive mouth, flowing auburn hair, and a general air of intelligence.

It was only natural that the disdainful soul of Kean should decline to minister to the fame of the new idol. He later found himself at Weymouth, where Master Betty was engaged, but resolutely declined to play with him. Pressed by the manager, he fled away, and in one of his wild moods hid himself in the woods outside the town. He was later found pacing up and down in front of the theatre, bitterly execrating his fortune. "*He* has overflowing houses; *I* play to empty benches. But I know that my powers are superior to his."

The pecuniary result of this amazing tide of success was marvelous. At Drury Lane, for twenty-eight nights' performance, from December 10, 1804, to April 22, 1805, the prodigious sum of £17,000 was taken, out of which he was paid at the rate of £100 a night for nearly the whole time. At Covent Garden he must have attracted even more money. And thus was exhibited the extraordinary phenomenon of a boy of thirteen bringing nearly £40,000 to the treasuries of two vast theatres within three months! He enjoyed, besides, the proceeds of two benefits, amounting to the handsome sum of £2500. Hamlet was the inappropriate character he chose for one of these occasions, though he took care to omit two awkward lines, singularly apropos. "Do the boys carry it always?" asks Hamlet; to whom it is replied: "Ay, that they do, my lord." In short, Mr. Boaden is inclined to believe that during this season he had almost made his fortune.

The father appears to have been eager to turn the child's

talents to profit, and worked him at high pressure. He had an instinct, in which he was justified by the issue, that the *furore* would be but short-lived. Without an instant's repose, the prodigy was taken into the country for a provincial tour, during which progress the scale of his profits may be conceived from his receiving £1000 at Birmingham for thirteen nights' playing. He visited Wolverhampton, York, and Worcester. Nearly every artist, successful in making money, is pursued with accusations of meanness and stinginess, because they do not respond to the enormous demands made upon their generosity. Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, and many more suffered cruelly from this charge. The exertions of Betty, the father, to secure all the money he could for his son naturally subjected him to such imputations. He caused a scandal by announcing a performance in Holy Week in the provinces, which drew the interference of the bishop. Moody used to tell indignantly how he had humbly asked the father of the Young Roscius to allow the boy to play for the fund for decayed actors, which would clear them from all their difficulties, and how, after six weeks' contemptuous silence, a refusal had been given. But a really shabby transaction was the treatment of Hough, the original, painstaking instructor of the boy, whose judicious assistance had been of incalculable service. This faithful ally, who had been taken from his humble post at the Belfast theatre, was now unceremoniously dismissed, and without the slightest provision. This scandalous ingratitude soon began to be talked of, and the discarded tutor, stung to fury by such neglect, threatened to lay his wrongs before the public. The following notice was significant: "*Hough* v. *Betty. An appeal to the judgment and candor of an impartial British public.* By William Hough, late dramatic tutor to the Young Roscius. In which will be introduced a curious and truly original correspondence,

previous and subsequent to Master Betty's first appearance on the stage. With notes theatrical, analytical, and explanatory. 'Blow, blow, thou winter's wind, thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude.'" Alarmed by such a menace, the Bettys at once came to terms, and fifty pounds a year was settled on the theatrical tutor for his life.

An amusing story was told connected with one of their country tours. Stephen Kemble, whose chief title to fame, besides his relation to the greater John and Sarah, was his being "able to play Falstaff without stuffing," came to town to engage Master Betty for his theatres at Durham and Newcastle. His wife, who remained in the country, was often pressed to report his opinion of the phenomenon, but she was disinclined to do so, save in the instance of Liston, a special friend, to whom she showed a passage in her husband's letter which was to the effect that "the whole business was a humbug." Soon after, the Newcastle bills announced the prodigy, and Liston one morning finding the manager reading the box-list with great satisfaction, asked him if he thought the engagement would turn out well. "It cannot be otherwise, sir," was the reply, "*with his stupendous abilities.*" Somewhat astounded, Liston said he did not know that the manager held so high an opinion of the Young Roscius. "Sir," said Mr. Kemble emphatically, "I look upon Master Betty to be a great—nay, the greatest tragic performer that has ever appeared upon these or any other boards!" "I suppose," answered Liston, "that you except Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble." "Sir," said the other, "I except nobody." Unable to resist the temptation, the actor then asked how he could reconcile such high praise with the opinion written to Mrs. Kemble. The other replied still more emphatically, "Sir, I maintain that Master Betty is the finest actor now living, and I ques-

tion if he be not the finest that ever lived; for," he added, his fine eyes twinkling with humor, "*I have engaged him, sir.*"

The extravagant popularity of the young Roscius was not destined to last beyond a couple of seasons. A hostile party presently manifested itself in the theatres, and though friends and admirers succeeded in putting it down, there was a sensible falling-off in the attraction. His benefit shrank from the triumphal £1500 to a modest £300, the average of the other performers. Still it was a compliment to find the House of Commons adjourning, on Pitt's motion, to go and see him play. His performance of Jeremy Diddler was another token of weakness. Indeed, this kind of entertainment can only flourish in extremes—mild and tempered approbation is not one of the conditions of its existence.

At last, after three or four years of hard work, during which the interest was gradually languishing, it was seen that a youth of sixteen or seventeen could no longer be considered a juvenile phenomenon. The confession of his true age at starting having effectually destroyed the chance of any of the usual theatrical fictions, in March, 1808, it was announced at Bath that he was about to retire; and in July of the same year he withdrew altogether, and entered Cambridge University.

He was now to become "a gentleman!" A commission was given to him in the Shropshire Yeomanry. At the University, it was often remarked that when theatrical matters were mentioned he preserved a solemn silence, as though the subject were disagreeable. He cultivated accomplishments, and distinguished himself in the hunting-field. He contracted a taste for archery, in which he was all his life signally skillful. His eyes, however, not unnaturally, turned wistfully to the splendid triumphs of his

childhood, and he was slow to believe that his success was owing to anything else but extraordinary dramatic genius. On his father's death, in 1811, he returned to the stage, making his reappearance at Bath in February, 1812, receiving the handsome sum of £800 for nine nights' performance. In November he again appeared at Covent Garden at fifty guineas a night, and was able to retain his position on the stage as a clever and interesting actor for twelve years more, when in August, 1824, he finally made his bow. Fifty years have passed by since that night, and it was hardly surprising that the world should have forgotten the boy that for a time extinguished the Kemble glories, and was fondled by duchesses. Nor was it astonishing that most people should have thought that years ago he had been gathered, in the almost invariable theatrical phrase, "to the tomb of all the Capulets." Putting a recently-done photograph of this interesting old gentleman beside an engraving published in the magazines of "the heaven-sent youth of 1805," the old soft and gentle air, and the outlines of the captivating features which so long ago caused such a sensation, can be recognized. He died on the 24th of August in the present year, and his story makes the last, and most curious chapter in the ROMANCE OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

THE END.

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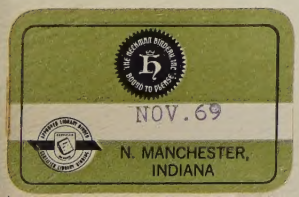
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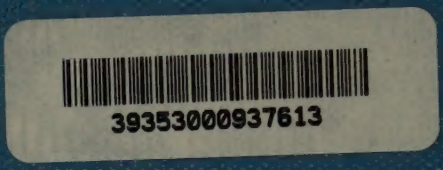
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